



Campbell 2.8.12

POEMS OF OISIN, ETC.

Poems

OF

OISIN, BARD OF ERIN.

“THE BATTLE OF VENTRY HARBOUR,” &c.

From the Irish.

BY

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NECESSITY FOR A TENANT RIGHT BILL FOR IRELAND.”

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P R E F A C E.

MR. JOHN MAC FADEN, a highly intelligent young farmer in Mayo, and MR. JAMES O'SULLIVAN, a native of the county Kerry, have greatly aided me in the translation of these ancient poems; to each of them I take this opportunity of tendering my warmest thanks for their kind assistance.

There are many in Ireland who could produce far better works on the poems of Oisín, and it is to be hoped that some of them will, ere long, give to the public good translations of the old and beautiful literature of their native land.

I shall esteem it a great favour on the part of any one who will furnish me with corrections of this little volume, or with materials for additional notes, explanatory of the FENIAN HEROES and their exploits; and shall gratefully acknowledge any contributions towards another work, should this be deemed worthy a successor.

J. H. S.

London, Oct. 28th, 1857.

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*Red
Green*

Poems of Oisín, &c.

OISIN,

BARD OF ERIN.

OLD Irish songs about the Fenii of Erin, mixed up with others relating to heroes who lived more than two hundred years before the time of Fionn, or Fingal, were the foundation upon which has been raised “that splendid fabric of imposture which, under the assumed name of Ossian, has for so long a period dazzled and deceived the world.” With these songs Macpherson interwove the fragments of Erse poetry then extant in the Highlands of Scotland, and which were but versions of Irish songs—relating to Cuthullin, Conloch, Fionn MacCumhal, Osgur, Goll or Gaul, &c.—attributed to Oisín son of Fionn, but generally supposed to be the productions of bards of the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Perhaps, however, those bards only collected and arranged songs which, even in *their* days were old in Ireland.

As a natural consequence, from the constant intercourse between the two countries, the Highlanders of Scotland would, in course of time, adopt the heroes and songs of Erin, and *vice versa*. Macpherson therefore boldly transformed Fionn, an Irish chief of the third century, into a native of Caledonia, and assigned him the imaginary kingdom of Morven, gave him Cuthullin for a contemporary, who had flourished about the time of Christ's birth, and performed with reference to Caracalla and Cathmor other ' flights of improbability and absurdity, upon which (as Moore says) " none but a writer so conscious of his own powers of imposture could have ventured."

These chronological blunders were exposed at the time, and Macpherson was accused of having altered Irish songs and then presenting them to the public as professedly almost literal translations of Erse poems collected by himself during a tour through the Hebrides. Instead of meeting those accusations boldly, as an honest translator would, he assumed an air of offended dignity, declining to produce the originals of his translations, or to particularize the sources whence they were derived.

A committee of the Highland Society of Scotland was appointed to inquire into the nature and authenticity of the Poems of Ossian, and a report

was drawn up, according to the directions of the committee, by H. Mackenzie, Esq., its chairman, which was published in 1805. All the exertions of the committee failed to obtain any one poem, the same in title and tenor with the poems published by Macpherson.

When the attention of the public was drawn to the Irish poems of Oisín, an endeavour was made (in the “Dissertation on the poems of Ossian”) to overcome the evidence they furnished that Fionn and Ossian were Irishmen, by

First, referring to the dialogue between Oisín and St. Patrick as affording such a chronological blunder as would suffice to throw contempt upon any claim which the Irish might advance on the strength of it. To this might fairly be returned a *tu quoque* reply, “What do you think of your own Fingal, and not only Fingal but even his grandson Osgur enjoying the company of heroes who flourished at the time when Christ was in the world?”

Besides, as has been already suggested, by means of an imaginary dialogue, a poet living several centuries after Oisín might seek to connect, and put into a form more likely to insure their preservation, poems which in his days were known to be songs of Oisín. It seems to me that nothing is more likely than that the early Christian

clergy should endeavour, when they saw how their flocks delighted in songs about their pagan ancestors, to convey the first principles of Christianity by means of a dialogue between their old blind bard Oisin and St. Patrick. A dialogue of this description would both interest and instruct the people, and would be all the more likely to rivet their attention if it formed, as it were, a thread upon which their beads of songs were strung.*

The *second argument*, in this Dissertation, against the antiquity of the Irish poems is set forth in these words,—“Unluckily for the antiquities of Ireland, they appear to be the work of a very modern period. Every stanza, nay almost every line, afford striking proofs that they cannot be three centuries old. Their allusions to the manners and customs of the fifteenth century are so many, that it is matter of wonder to me, how any one could dream of their antiquity. They are entirely writ in that romantic taste which prevailed two ages ago. Giants, enchanted castles,

* Indeed, I am inclined to attribute much of the influence possessed by the Irish Priest of the present day over his flock to his intimate acquaintance and *sympathy* with the traditions and songs so interesting to his people, rather than to superstitious awe inspired by his spiritual calling; and this because I have, during several years, observed that the peasant really *loves* his priest, and we are not naturally inclined to love a person of whom we stand in slavish dread.

dwarfs, palfreys,* witches and magicians, form the whole circle of the poet's invention."

This means—*because* in the fifteenth century poets sang of enchanted castles, witches, magicians and giants: *therefore* any poem in which reference is made to such individuals, *cannot* be older than the fifteenth century.

Admitting that the poems of the fifteenth century, in Europe generally, do abound with stories about magicians, enchanters, giants, &c., from what source did the writers of them derive their ideas? Either, they were indebted *solely* to their own fertile imaginations, in which case alone Macpherson's argument has any weight: or else, with their own fictions they interwove legends *then* extant. Now, if we find mention made of witches, magicians, &c., in works of indisputably greater antiquity than these poems of the fifteenth century, then the whole argument falls to the ground.

The Bible tells of magicians, enchanters, and witches: from early ages enchantments, witchcrafts, magic, and astrology, were throughout the East allied with religious ceremonies. In Gen. xli. 8, we read that Pharaoh "called for all the magicians of Egypt, and all the wise men thereof: and Pharaoh told them his dream." Exod. vii.

* By-the-bye, I have never yet, in all the Irish poems, met with any mention of a *palfrey*.

11, 12, they appear as workers of magic or enchanters, "Then Pharaoh also called the wise men and the sorcerers: now the magicians of Egypt they also did in like manner with their enchantments. For they cast down every man his rod, and they *became* serpents." No optical delusion, no feat of jugglery such as those of Anderson, "the Wizard of the North." In the same chapter, verse 22, it is said that the waters of Egypt were turned into blood by the enchantments of the magicians. Exod. viii. 18, the magicians tried to create lice, but failed.

Joshua was commanded to drive out the Canaanites because they used enchantments, worshipped the hosts of heaven in groves and on high places. 2 Chron. xxxiii. 5, 6, we read of Manasseh that "he built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of the Lord. And he caused his children to pass through the fire in the valley of the son of Hinnom; also he observed times, and used enchantments, and used witchcraft, and dealt with a familiar spirit." Daniel, when in captivity in Babylon, was asked by Nebuchadnezzar to interpret dreams; which the Chaldeans, or magicians, could not do.

Let us now see if we can trace any probable connexion between the superstitions and practices of the Canaanites and those of the pagan Irish.

The Canaanites, or Phœnicians, (in the Septuagint translation of the Bible the names are used promiscuously) were, in the days of Abraham, a commercial people: the convenience of their harbours Tyre and Sidon, and the abundance of ship-building materials—the “fir trees of Senir, the cedars of Lebanon, and the oaks of Bashan,” Ezekiel xxvii. 5, 6—leading them to study navigation. The arms of Joshua compelled them to limit their territory to the sea-shore: this drove them to colonize, and their first settlements were Cyprus and Rhodes. They then formed colonies in Greece, Sicily, Sardinia, Spain, Carthage, and even on the west coasts of Africa.* Carthage the most resembled its mother country in adventurous navigation.

The worship of Baal, or the sun, on high places and in groves: the making children to pass between fires: astrology, enchantments and magic, were carried by the Phœnicians and their colonists (especially the Carthaginians) to all countries with which they traded. Hundreds of years before Christ, Ireland received from the East similar customs, worship and superstitions: through what channels were they conveyed? I am in-

* It is mentioned by Moore, in his History of Ireland that words have been found deep cut in a rock at Tingis, to this effect—“We fly from Joshua the robber.”

clined to think that they reached Ireland direct from Phœnicia, direct from Carthage, and indirectly from both those countries through Spain.

The Phœnician merchants, through their neighbours the Syrians, trafficked largely with the Eastern countries, distributing the products of the East in the West. It is not unlikely that the round towers of Erin were built by people following this line of trade, from the Persian Gulf to the Isle of the West: and it is curious to remark that the names of these two countries, Persia and Ireland, so distant from each other, were almost the same; Erinn being one old name for Ireland, Irann for Persia: add to this, the fact that round towers, exactly alike in the principles of their construction, are found in either country, and in these two countries alone:* also that, it is still the custom in both countries to decorate wells and fountains with rags, clothes, &c., and the probability is greatly strengthened.

Since the worship of Baal was once general in Ireland, it is not only probable but all but certain that, it would be aided by astrology and real enchantments, such as those used by Manasseh.

* It is by no means certain that the two round towers in Scotland are older than the early Christian ages: the Brechin round tower is not exactly like the towers of Ireland, even in construction.

If so, what can be more likely than that tales of enchantment and witchcraft would be handed down from father to son? From the father, a victim perhaps of the Druid or sorcerer, to the son whose childish heart would throb fearfully whilst he listened to accounts of deeds supernatural? The impression made upon the excited mind of the child would be ineffaceable, and the tale would certainly lose nothing of its awful character in being transmitted to the next generation.

If we turn to Spain, between which country and Ireland communication was early established, we find that it had public schools of magic in Toledo, Seville, and Salamanca; in the latter town necromantic mysteries were taught in a deep cavern, the mouth of which was walled up by Isabella, wife of King Ferdinand; whilst, at Toledo the celebrated magician Mangis, called by Ariosto, Malagigi, studied the black art. "Pope Sylvester, who actually imported from Spain the use of the Arabian numerals, was supposed to have learned there the magic for which he was stigmatised by the ignorance of his age." *Will of Malmesbury*. This pope lived about 536 A.D. Italy, Spain, the South of France, and Ireland were probably all indebted to Phœnician and Carthaginian traders for customs, worships, legends, and superstitions, which, after many cen-

turies, were related in poems in the languages of those countries.

The reader who has followed me through this line of argument, based on historical facts, will be pretty certain to admit that, the poem which has no reference to, or rather which is not principally made up of, extravagant, vague and superstitious traditions, bears internal evidence of its comparatively recent production.

But it is not on written poems alone that we depend to enable us to arrive at the conclusion that Oisín or Ossian was in reality a bard of Erin, and not of Scotland. So far from that being the case, my first intention was to publish a volume consisting *entirely* of songs of Oisín which have been taken down for me, in the Irish language, from the lips of old people in Mayo. As it is, I have only given a selection from them, which will be found under the head "Mayo Mythology"; thinking that I should best set forth the justice of Ireland's claim to the old blind bard, by—

First, giving translations of some old MSS relating to the Fenii of Erin (the Dialogue being one) which were in existence long before Macpherson's time: prefacing them by short histories of Deardra and of Conloch, in order that the reader might judge for himself how much Macpherson has despised chronological correctness.

And *secondly*, by giving, in a separate form and for the sake of contrast, literal translations of some of the legendary poems of Mayo extant, for the songs of Oisín, or Ossian, still delight the peasant in the west and south-west of Ireland: for him there is no greater treat than to listen to tales about the ancient warriors of his native land, Fionn MacCumhal, Goll or Gaul son of Morni, and Osgur “of the dire deeds”: at mention of their names his eye lights up with an expression of mingled pride, fondness and sadness.

Whence the sadness? Even an Englishman—if he has lived some time in the less happy parts of Ireland, and has been something more than a superficial observer—must confess that the hand of the Saxon has been, and still is, laid too heavily on the shoulders of the Celt. This oppressive treatment of the children of Erin has greatly helped to preserve the songs of their bards which have been handed down, though doubtless with innumerable alterations, through fifteen centuries or more.

But the rising generation is being instructed almost exclusively in the English language, and ere long death will silence the last tongue which could narrate in Irish verse, the wild and romantic exploits which form the theme of so many poems popularly attributed to Oisín.

DEARDRA.

[The poem "Dar-thula," in Macpherson's work, derives its argument from the Irish legends concerning Deardra. From Keating I have obtained materials for the prose account of the sons of Uisneach, and fragments of ancient poetry contained in Neilson's Irish grammar have enabled me to lay before the reader Deardra's farewell to the shores of Alban, and her lamentation over the grave of Naoise, Ainle, and Ardan. Connor lived about the time of Christ.]

CONNOR, king of Ulster, was at an entertainment in the house of Feidlim Mac Doill, one of his ministers, when the wife of his host gave birth to a daughter. A druid foretold that the child just born would be the cause of a great war between Connaught and Ulster, and that the war would prove fatal to the latter. This prediction so greatly alarmed the nobility that they advised the immediate death of the infant; but Connor would not let them kill the child, saying, "I will prevent the fulfilment of the prophecy, for I will

rear the child under my own inspection, and when she is grown up shall make her my wife." He then removed the girl from her father's house, and carried her to his own court; the druid insisted that his prediction would come to pass, and called the child Deardra.

The king placed her in a well fortified tower, giving strict orders that none should be permitted to go near her room but her necessary attendants, and the king's favourite woman, Leabharcham, who was a poetess and highly honoured. Within the walls of this castle the young Deardra grew up to be a lady of singular beauty, and the most accomplished person in the kingdom.

One snowy day as Deardra and her instructress were looking out of the window they saw a man killing a calf, some of the blood fell upon the snow, and a raven came and fed upon it. This sight roused a strange passion in the young lady, who was of a very amorous temperament; turning to Leabharcham she said, "Would that I were in the arms of a man who was of the three colours I now see; his skin white as the driven snow, his hair black as the raven's wing, and on his cheeks a blooming red, deep as the blood of the calf."

Leabharcham was rather startled at this wish, but out of tenderness to the young lady she told her there was a young gentleman at court exactly

agreeing with that description, whose name was Naoise, the son of Uisneach. Deardra begged of Leabharcham that she would contrive to bring him privately into the castle, and introduce him into her room; for that "she was passionately charmed by the description of his features, and should be in torment till she saw him." The indulgent woman promised she should be eased of her pain upon the first opportunity; and soon after that she told Naoise of the lady's love for him, assuring him that, if he had gallantry enough to venture his person, she would convey him into the tower, and give him possession of one of the finest women in the world.

Young Naoise could not withstand an offer so tempting: he soon had an interview with the lady, and after many endearments she entreated him to take her out of the castle. Naoise promised he would release her or die in the attempt.

As there were many soldiers in the tower he asked his brothers Ainle and Ardan to help him, which they promised to do: they surprised the garrison and carried off the damsel. Flying to the coast they took the first ship they could find, and reached Alban in safety. The king of Alban gave to the three brothers large tracts of land on the western coast, and in the isles.

The report of the great beauty of Deardra made

such an impression upon the king that he resolved to force her from the arms of her husband. Naoise was told of the design, and prepared to defend himself. After many battles between the king's troops and the children of Erin, Naoise was forced to fly with his wife and followers to an adjacent island, where he expected to be attacked ere long.

In this distress he sent to the nobles of Ulster, who were his friends, asking for aid : the nobles went in a body to Connor, and requested that the three sons of Uisneach might be recalled. The king now trembling on account of the prophecy, and seeing that he could not by open force bring about the deaths of the persons who he feared were likely to fulfil it, veiled his treacherous purpose under the mask of generous forgiveness, and affected to be desirous of befriending the unhappy pair. To convince the friends of Naoise that he had no evil design upon the three brothers, he gave two of his own friends into the hands of the nobles, as hostages for the security of Naoise and his followers.

The names of the two hostages were Feargus, son of Roigh, and Cormac Conloingios. Trusting in the honour of the king, Feargus sent his own son, Fiachadh, with a large body of men to the rescue of Naoise : when the victory was won over the king of Alban, Naoise, Ainle, and Ardan,

whose generous souls never suspected treachery, were willing to return to Erin. In vain Deardra tried to dissuade them from flying to their own ruin ; with dire forebodings she watched the shores of Alban receding from her view ; on deck she sang this plaintive farewell :—

Dear to me is that eastern shore, dear is Alban,
land of wonders ; never would I have forsaken it
had I not come with Naoise.

Dear are Dunfay and Dunfin, dear is the lofty
Dun towering above ; dear is Inis-Drayon too,
and dear to me Dunsainne.

Coilcuan, oh Coilcuan ! where Ainle and where
Ardan would resort ; too short, alas, was my stay
and that of Naoise in the west of Alban.

Glenlee, oh Glenlee ! beneath the shade of thy
thickets I often slept ; fish, venison, and prime of
badger, on these have I feasted in Glenlee.

Oh Glenmessan, Glenmessan ! rich were thy
herbs, and bright thy winding paths ; lulled by
falling streams we reposed above the grass-clad
slopes of Messan.

Vale of Eithe ! O vale of Eithe ! there was my

first dwelling fixed; beauteous are its woods in smile of morning's light; at eve long lingers the sun in vale of Eithe.

Glenarchon, Glenarchon! fair is the vale of Dromchon; never was man more sprightly than my Naoise in vale of Archon.

Oh Glendarua, Glendarua! my love remains with all who inhabit it; sweetly sang the cuckoo on bending bough, high over vales of Glendarua.

Dear to me is that eastern shore, dear are its waters, flowing over pure sand: never would I have left it had I not come with my love.

Farewell for ever, fair coasts of Alban; your bays and your vales shall no more delight me: watching the sons of Uisneach at the chase, often I sat delighted on thy cliffs.

They landed in Erin, and when Connor heard of their arrival he sent Eogan, son of Durtheacht, to bring them to his palace of Eamhain: but he gave private orders to Eogan to kill them all on their way. In the plains of Eamhain Eogan met the sons of Uisneach: he sought for Naoise, and advanced towards him as if he were about to wel-

come him back to Erin : suddenly he thrust him through with a spear, and Naoise fell dead on the spot.

When Fiachadh, who had been sent by his father Feargus to help the three brothers, saw this treacherous action, he attacked Eogan, but he also was thrust through and died instantly. Animated with such success Eogan, who was a man of great courage, fell upon the two brothers Ainle and Ardan, slew them, and routed all their forces. then seizing upon the unfortunate Deardra he carried her straight to the palace of Connor.

In her sorrow Deardra thinks of her former rival, the lady of Dundron; and recalls events of mingled grief and pleasure.

The chiefs of Alban met at the banquet, and the valiant sons of Uisneach were there : to the fair daughter of the chieftain of Dundron, Naoise gave a secret kiss.

He sent a sportive doe a hind of the forest, and a fawn running beside her : returning from the hosts of Inverness he visited her by the way.

When I heard this my heart was filled with jealousy : I took my boat and rushed upon the waves, regardless whether I should live or die.

Ainle and Ardan, those two valiant youths, followed me swimming: I returned home with them, two who would face a hundred.

Then Naoise gave his word of truth, and swore three times upon his warlike arms, that never would he again give me cause of pain till he joined the hosts of the dead.

The lady of Dundron likewise gave her solemn word, and vowed that so long as Naoise lived on earth she never would accept the love of man.

Alas! did she hear this night that Naoise was laid in his grave beneath the clay, she would weep with wild sorrow, and I too would weep with her sevenfold.

Long, long is the day to me without the children of Uisneach, in company with them no day seemed weary.

Standing over their graves whilst they were being dug, she pours forth this lamentation:—

Sons of a king, cause of these my flowing tears :
three lions on the hill of Umah : three on whom
the daughters of Breatan* doated : three hawks
of the hill of Guilinn : sons of a king to whom

* Breatan, i.e. Wales.

warriors made obeisance and to whom heroes yielded homage.

Three who failed not in battle, your fall is cause of woe: three sons of the daughter of Chathfa, three supports of the wars of Cualna.*

Three reared beneath the care of Aife, to whom the country paid tribute: three pillars of the headlong bursting battle were the three youths of Sgatha.†

Three fosterlings of Uatha, three heroes abiding in victory, three renowned sons of Uisneach I weep, you have left me to mourn.

Dark were their brows, their eyes flashed brightly, their cheeks were as the embers of flame.

Their legs were as the down of swans; active

* *Cualna*. Cualnia was the property of Cuthullin in the county Louth. Cuthullin, Conall Cearnach, Ainle, Ardaur, and Naoise were first cousins. "Cuthullin, Conall Cearnach, and other heroes of the Red Branch performed exploits in the seven years' war between Connaught and Ulster, called *Tain-bo-Cuailgne* (spoils of the cattle at Cualgna) one of the chief causes of its origin having been the seizure of an immense quantity of cattle by the troops of Maud, queen of Connaught, at Cualgna." *Moore*.

† *Sgatha*. It would appear from this that the sons of Uisneach had learned the art of war in the Isle of Skye: for further information about *Sgatha* see next piece, "Conloch, son of Cuthullin."

and graceful were their limbs : soft and gentle were their hands, their arms were fair and manly.

The high king of Ulster was my betrothed, him I forsook for love of Naoise : after him my days will be few : I will sing their funeral dirge.

Let no one think I shall survive my love : Ainle and Ardan are gone, life to me is not sweet.

After thee I will not live ; my days are already too many ; since the light of my love is quenched I will shed showers of tears o'er his grave.

Man who diggest their grave, make not their tomb narrow ; in the grave I will be with them, sorrowing and lamenting.

Their three shields and three spears oft formed the bed beneath them ; place their three swords of steel in the grave, above their heads, youth.

Their three hounds and three hawks shall henceforth be without hunters of game ; the three pillars of battle, three youths of Conall Cearnach.*

* *Conall Cearnach* was Master of the Ulster knights, or champion of the heroes of the Red Branch. *Teagh na Craoibhe Ruadhe* (House of the Red Branch) was a hall near to the palace of Eamhain, where the most renowned champions lodged their arms, hung up their trophies, &c. &c, Miss Brooke has in a note to one of her poems, " Our early

The three collars of their three hounds draw groans from my bursting heart; with me they were in keeping, I weep at sight of them.

Never was I alone until this day, when your grave is preparing; though we often crossed the solitary waste I never was in loneliness.

My sight begins to fail, for I have seen thy grave, my Naoise! soon shall my spirit fly away, for the people of my lamentation live not.

Having thus sung she flung herself on the breast of Naoise and died. According to other accounts she did not die until she had been goaded unto madness by the insults of Connor, king of Ulster; seeking release from such torment she flung herself out of his chariot, and her head was dashed against a rock.

Maud, queen of Connaught, gave assistance to Fergus and Cormac Conloingios in the wars with Connor, king of Ulster, which followed the deaths of the sons of Uisneach; for many years

writers (says Mr. O'Halloran) tell us (and Archbishop Usher affirms the same) that the celebrated champion, Conall Cearnach, was actually at Jerusalem at the time of the crucifixion of our Saviour, and related the story to the king of Ulster on his return."

there was much bloodshed on either side. The death of Connor, according to some Irish traditions, occurred thus:—For six years before his death Connor had been obliged to avoid violent exercise, wine, &c., on account of a wound on the top of his head. On the Friday when Christ was crucified, Connor was surprised at the eclipse and horrid darkness which followed the death of the Son of God, and asked Bacrach, an eminent druid of Leinster, what was the occasion of that wonderful event. “The pagan prophet replied that the cause of those strange and violent alterations arose from a barbarous murder that day committed by the wicked Jews upon a most innocent and divine person, Jesus Christ, the Son of the everlasting God. The king resented that inhuman act with such passion that he cried out if he were a spectator of the villany he would be revenged upon those barbarous Jews, who had the insolence to destroy his Lord. He immediately drew his sword and went to an adjacent grove, and, distracted almost to madness at the thoughts of that abominable act, he hacked and cut the trees * * * * * by the violence of his anger his blood and spirits were disordered and fermented, which had that effect that the wound burst open, and some of his brains followed, so that he died upon the spot.”

CONLOCH, SON OF CUTHULLIN.

[The events related in this story occurred some few years before the birth of Christ; in the reign of Connor Mac Nessa, king of Ulster. Conloch was killed very soon after Ainle, Ardan, and Naoise (who were first cousins of Cuthullin) had been put to death by the perfidious Connor.]

CUTHULLIN went to Scotland to receive a martial education at Dun-Sgathach, a fortress in the Isle of Skye, under the rule of Sgathach, who was a masculine woman, and an instructress in the use of arms. Whilst there he fell in love with Aife, the beautiful daughter of Ardgeine. Being obliged to return to Erin, he left the lady pregnant; on taking leave he gave to Aoife a chain of gold, and told her to take the greatest care of it, and requested that if the child should be a boy she would send him to Erin with that chain round his neck, so that he might by that token be known to his father. Cuthullin also desired that the boy

should, before coming to Erin, be sent to Dun-Sgathach ; moreover he left these three injunctions for the guidance of his son's conduct, which Aife promised to instil into the mind of the youth : first, that he should never reveal his name to a foe ; second, that he should never give the way to any man who seemed to demand it as his right ; third, not to refuse a challenge from the boldest champion alive.

Soon after Cuthullin's departure Aife gave birth to a son ; she called him Conloch, and had him carefully instructed by Sgathach. He discovered the same genius with his father, and when his education was completed his mother sent him to Erin. A feeling of jealousy had arisen in her mind, and she saw Conloch depart hoping that Cuthullin might fall by the sword of his son.

When the youth reached the coast of Erin he arrayed himself in his fighting costume, which was a proof that he came with hostile intent, and went to the palace of the king of Ulster, called Eamhain. Connor sent a messenger, whose name was Cuinnire, to inquire who he was, and upon what business he came. The messenger went to Conloch, and addressed him with the utmost delicacy and politeness :—

“ Welcome to our land bold stranger : yet thy steps must surely have gone astray, since we

see thee in battle dress? the eastern breeze has safely brought thee to these coasts :—tell us, then, gentle stranger, what are thy travels and what thy deeds of glory. Do not, like some of Alban's sons, refuse to pay the *Eric** on the bridge: call not forth the sword to end the days of thy youth!"

Said Conloch, "If such has been the custom of your wretched land hitherto, never again shall chief be thereby disgraced; this right hand shall soon destroy your boasted law." He roused himself to deeds of fight: twice fifty heroes he bound upon the plain: they fell under his dire sway, bleeding they lay low.

Then spake Connor son of Nessa to his hosts, "Is there no warrior to win back for us our glory? Is the ardour of war so cooled among us that none will dare to force yon haughty youth to tell his name and purpose? To humble his pride and stay his arm of slaughter?"

The soul of Conall Cearnach kindled; aloft he raised his arm, the terror of his foes; his hand grasped his flaming sword. Confidently he went to meet the foe; but he met force such as he never met before. The champion of Erin was bound by fierce Conloch.

* The payment of *Eric*, or sort of tribute, was a sign of submission.

Auliffe was filled with grief, he cried, " Let a swift messenger carry the tidings of shame to Cuthullin, first of heroes : he rests within the lofty walls of Dundalgan, or else in the halls of Dethin." *

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" Welcome, Cuthullin, renowned in strife : behold, one hundred warriors lie in dust ! see thy friend Conall bound ! behold—let not thine arm be slow to take vengeance."

Sorrowful was the face of Cuthullin, he said, " Each foreign knight may now insult our shores !! lost is the pride of Erin ! Oh ! since your deaths, ye renowned sons of Uisneach, terror, defeat, and shame have made known our loss and our disgrace.—I see our mighty chief in bonds : can *I* cope with the subduer of Conall Cearnach, the skilful and the brave ?"

The son of Nessa said, " O arm of Erin, hero of unmatched strength, dost thou shun the fight, brave Cuthullin !! favourite of the land, fly to aid Conall Cearnach thy friend."

Cuthullin went forth, his step was firm and haughty : " Be courteous, valiant knight, and declare unto me thy purpose, name, lineage, and na-

* *Dundalgan* the residence of Cuthullin : now Dundalk. *Dun Dethin*, or fortress of Dethin who was Cuthullin's mother. See "*Reliques of Irish Poetry*."

tive land : refuse not the hand of friendship :—yet, youth of the fair hair, thou shalt have battle if thou dost desire it.”

“ Fear dwells not in my breast ; to none will I reveal my name and purpose : I will fight thee, though strong thine arm, chief of the flashing sword.—Yet would I gladly grasp thy hand in peace did my vow permit me, for thy face is noble : against thee I have no desire to fight.”

Slowly they prepared for battle : unwillingly, they drew their blades : long time they fought. At length shame roused the soul of Cuthullin : he hurled his deadly lance : the youth sank down in the dust. Rage left the generous victor, and with gentle voice of pity he said, “ Brave youth, art cannot heal that wound ; tell now thy name and wherefore we see thee here : thy tomb of honour we will raise, we will sing the song of thy glory.”

The youth gasped forth, “ Come near—still nearer ;—here let me die—by thy side—thy hand, my father :—draw near also, warriors of Erin, hearken to the voice of my anguish : I must blight my father’s heart ! First of heroes, hear the dying voice of Conloch, thy son : see the child taught at Dun-Sgathac, see the cherished heir of Dundalgan ! Alas ! I die early, a sad victim to an artful woman !”

“O my lost son! cursed is this arm which hath laid thee low! O wretched Aife, come from thy childless halls, witness the woe that will break thy heart! Why art thou not here?—thy gentle voice would have saved my Conloch, my son, my hero!

“Too late!—he dies—alas!—come Aife, come, let the tears of thy sorrow flow: bathe his wound, support his drooping head: let the mother’s tears wash away the blood shed by the father.”

“Call not on Aife: curst be her art; *she* wrought thy Conloch’s fall. Curst be the tongue which filled my soul with a lying tale, which told me I was no more my father’s care! curst be the tongue which has filled my father’s heart with anguish; he sees my blood bathe his sacred feet. No foe ever knew my name; even to thee, my sire, I would not now declare my birth, were not death surely at hand.

“But Cuthullin, how didst thou not see that I was only *half* a foe? didst thou not see how my arm spared thy breast? didst thou not see that my spear fondly glanced past thy form?”

The wretched father answered not: wildly he raved:—

“Oh, my loved Conloch! bright ray of glory, set not in dark night: live to share thy father’s wars: fiercely we will dash o’er falling ranks: armies shall yield to my hero.

“Art thou gone?—gone!—gone! Oh wretched eyes that see my murdered Conloch! his shield is laid in the dust, and dimmed is his flashing blade. Let me die; forlorn I am, deserted! no tender tie, no fond delight for me: this hand has murdered thee! this hand is red with thy blood! horror, wildest horror!

“Reason, where art thou? fled? with Conloch? no ray cheers my soul: deep, black despair.

“My soul drifts o’er the gloomy waves of grief like a boat on wild ocean deserted.—But the grave will soon enclose me; then shall I have peace; as ripe fruit falls in autumn, so my sorrow shall sink in the tomb!!”

THE FENII OF ERIN AND FIONN MAC CUMHAL.

THE achievements of the Fenii have, from almost the earliest days of the Christian era, formed the theme of Ireland's romances and songs: upwards of two hundred years ago Dr Keating collected many curious particulars concerning this body of heroes, from ancient MSS, traditions and bardic songs then extant. Although we cannot implicitly rely upon the accuracy of such details, still they are by no means to be set aside as altogether fabulous: nor should they be entirely destitute of interest for British statesmen even, seeing that the names Fenii, Gaul, Fionn, Oisin and Osgur, are to this very day household words fondly cherished in the cabins of hundreds of thousands in Ireland. When, as in every war has been the case, we see the utter disregard of danger evinced by the soldier of Erin; when we witness his

headlong battle charge and his cheerfulness under privation and suffering; should we err if we said that, for the possession of those soldierlike qualities he is in *some* measure indebted to the warlike desires aroused in his childish heart as, nestling night after night near the peat fire of his lowly home, he listened breathless to "the songs of the days of old?" There is nothing despicable in a man's preserving strongest to the evening of life his affection for those whose unbought sympathy gladdened its dawn; and why should the children of Erin be derided if they keep with jealous care all memorials of the past? Why sneered at if they still cling fondly to old attachments, and listen with partial ear to praises of those heroes whose shades they revere?

Those who wish to understand the following poems, will not think it waste of time to learn what the old bards and romancists have handed down concerning the Fenii. For the benefit of such readers I have condensed from the writings of Keating, Moore, and others, particulars relating to the organization, duties, and discipline of the Trained Bands of Erin when they were commanded by Fionn MacCumhal:—

It is uncertain what time the *Fianna Eirinn* (Militia of Erin) was first called into existence, but we know that in the reign of Cormac Mac

Art, who flourished about 254 A.D., it was under the command of Fionn MacCumhal of the Clanna Baoisgne, and that during several previous generations the chief control over the Fenii had been confided to members of the tribe of Baoisgne. This standing army was in the pay of the monarchs of Ireland, who provided for the support of the men by billeting them upon the country during the winter season, from Allhallowtide to May: obliging them to find their own food during the rest of the year by fishing and hunting.

When in winter quarters they received pay from the kings, in summer they had only what they could get for the skins of the animals taken in chase.

These were their duties—to defend the country against foreign or domestic enemies, to support the rights and successions of their kings, to guard the sea coasts and to take care that no pirates lurked in the creeks of the isle, plundering the inhabitants: in short, they were sworn to uphold the rights of the crown and to secure the lives and property of the people.

They were particular in the method of dressing their meat when on hunting expeditions: they chose a place where there was plenty of wood and water, then they kindled large fires in which they made stones red hot. Whilst these stones were

being heated the huntsmen dug a deep pit ; they lined the bottom of it with hot stones, upon which the raw flesh was put bound up hard in green sedge : over these bundles of flesh was fixed another layer of hot stones ; then more meat, tied up, and so on till the pit was filled. The evening was their general dining time, and they seldom had more than one meal in the day. To this day the marks of these fires continue deep in the earth, the country people calling them *fulacht Fian*.

After dinner they made their beds with great care, cutting down branches of trees they placed them next the ground : upon these was laid dry moss, and upon the top of all green rushes were strewed. These beds are called in the ancient MSS, *Tri cuilceatha na feine* (three beds or layers of the Fenii).

In time of peace these forces consisted of three battalions of 3000 men each ; but in time of war, or if there was occasion to help the colony of Dalriads settled in Argyleshire, the number of battalions was increased to seven. Each battalion was under an officer corresponding with the modern colonel : every hundred men had a captain : every fifty men were under a lieutenant, and a serjeant, resembling the *Decurio* of the Romans, was set over five-and-twenty : sometimes there was also a man ruling over ten. When the

chronicles of Erin make mention of *Fear Comhlan Ceal* (a man able to fight a hundred) it is not to be understood that he was able to conquer a hundred with his own hand; it means that such an officer had the command of an hundred men, at whose head he would fight hand to hand with the same number of foes.

Every soldier, before he was enrolled, was required by Fionn to swear: first, that when he was disposed to marry, he would not follow the mercenary custom of insisting upon a portion with his wife, but, without regard to her fortune, would choose a woman for her virtue, her courtesy, and her good manners. Second: that he would never offer violence to a woman. Third: that as far as his abilities would permit he would relieve the poor who asked for meat or drink. Fourth: that he would not refuse to fight with nine men of any other nation who should challenge or set upon him.

Fionn ordained that no person should be received into the service unless his father and mother, and all his relatives, would give security that not one of them should attempt to revenge his death upon the person who might slay him, but would leave the matter wholly in the hands of his fellow soldiers: on the other hand, it was determined that the relations of a soldier should not

suffer in any way on account of misbehaviour on his part.

The *second* qualification necessary was, that the youth should be well acquainted with the twelve books of poetry, and be able to compose verses.

The *third* was, that he should be a perfect master of defence: to prove this he was placed in a field of sedge reaching up to his knees, having in his hands a target and a hazle stake as long as a man's arm. Nine experienced soldiers, from a distance of nine ridges of land, were to hurl their spears at him at once: if he was unhurt Fionn admitted him, but if he was wounded he was sent off with a reproach.

The *fourth* was, to run well and defend himself when in flight: to make trial of his activity he was made to run through a wood, having a start of a tree's breadth, the whole of the Fenii pursuing him: if he was overtaken or wounded in the wood he was refused, as too sluggish and unskilful to fight with honour among such valiant troops.

Fifth, that he should have a strong arm and be able to hold his weapon steadily.

Sixth, that when he ran through a wood in chase his hair should continue tied up: if it fell loose he could not be received.

Seventh, to be so swift and light of foot as not to break a rotten stick by standing upon it.

Eighth, to be able to leap over a tree as high as his forehead, and to stoop under a tree that was lower than his knees.

Ninth, without stopping or lessening his speed be able to draw a thorn out of his foot.

Tenth, to take an oath of fidelity to the commander of the Fenii.

Keating gravely says, " So long as these terms of admission were exactly insisted upon, the militia of Ireland were an invincible defence to their country, and a terror to rebels at home and enemies abroad."

It was in the reign of Cairbre, son of Cormac, that the Fianna was, " in consequence of the dissensions within its own body, as well as of the formidable degree of power which it had attained, put down summarily by force. This national army had been for some time divided into two septs, the Clanna Boisdne, commanded by Oisin, the son of Fionn, and the Clanna Morna, which was at this time protected by the king of Munster : and the rights claimed by the former sept, to take precedence of all other military tribes, had been long a source of violent feuds between their respective chieftains. A celebrated contention of this nature between Goll and Finn MacCumhal, near the palace of the latter at Almhain, had risen to such a height that it could only be appeased,

we are told, by the intervention of the bards, who, shaking the chain of silence between the chiefs, succeeded in calming the strife. To such a pitch, however, had the presumption of the Clanna Boisgne at length arrived, that in the reign of Cairbre, having had the audacity to defy the throne itself, they were attacked by the united force of almost all the royal troops of the kingdom (the king of Munster alone taking part with the rebellious Fianns), and a battle, memorable for its extent of carnage ensued, in which Osgur, the son of Oisín, or Ossian, was slain by the monarch's own hand." *

That battle was fought at Gabhra in the year 296, as the annals of Inisfallen record, and Ciarbre the king died of wounds there received. An ancient poem attributed to Oisín says, that "Finn and his heroes were not there to assist them: they were absent on a Roman expedition." † It goes on to say that he returned on the eve of a battle just in time to close the eyes of Osgur his grandson. The poet adds, "Finn never after that was

* Vide Moore's History of Ireland, vol. I.

† According to a long and very ancient poem in my possession called "Cath Gabhra," or battle of Gabhra, Fionn was actually present at the fight, and took his share in the combat; whilst Moore is of opinion that he was killed A.D. 273, 23 years before the battle occurred.

known to smile : peace, after that, had no sweets, nor war any triumphs that could restore joy to his breast, or raise one wish for ambition or for glory, even though the empire of heaven itself were to be won by his arm."

With reference to causes assigned for the discontents which occasioned this battle, historians lay the chief blame upon the Fenii, whilst the bards, taking part with their favourite heroes, cast the whole odium upon Cairbre.

The *book of Hoath* asserts that in this battle all were destroyed except Oisin ; and that he lived to see St. Patrick, to whom he, (see the " Dialogue between Oisin and St. Patrick ") related the battles and chases of the Fenii.

Fionn was the son of Cumhal by Muirne Munchaomh* (*fair-neck*) : there are various opinions as to who was Cumhal's father. O'Connell, in his " Dirge of Ireland," written 1704, says that Art was the father, and Trien Mor the grandfather of Cumhal. According to others, Cumhal was son of Baoisgne (*smooth-palm*) who was commander of the Leinster militia. O'Brennan writes, " our own opinion is that Baoisgne was only the ancestor, not the father. Fionn was sixth in descent from

* *Muirne Munchaomh* was the daughter of Thade, the son of Nuagat an eminent Druid : it was in right of his mother that Fionn inherited Almhain.

Nuaghadh Neacht:—Nuaghadh 1 : Baoisgne 2 : Trien 3 : Art 4 : Cumhal 5 : Fionn 6.”

Moore tells us that in the reign of Cormac, Fionn contributed to a great legislative work, called *Celestial Judgments*, which had been from time to time compiled : he died by the lance of an assassin.

There is no reason to believe that Fionn was of extraordinary stature ; nor is there any evidence that Campian is correct in asserting that Fionn was known under the name Roanus. The following beautiful description of Fionn, translated from the “*Rhapsody of Oisín*” by Miss Brooke, will convey in few words, the character assigned to him by the bards in general.

“Fionn of the large and liberal soul of bounty : exceeding all his countrymen in the prowess and accomplishments of a warrior. King of mild majesty, and numerous bards.

“The ever open house of kindness was his heart : the seat of undaunted courage ! great was the chief of the mighty Fenii : Fionn of the perfect soul, the consummate wisdom : whose knowledge penetrated events, and pierced through the veil of futurity. Fionn of the splendid and ever-during glories.

“Bright were his blue-rolling eyes, and his hair like flowing gold! lovely were the charms of his unaltered beauty, and his cheeks like the glowing rose.

“Each female heart overflowed with affection for the hero whose bosom was like the whiteness of the chalky cliff, for the mild son of Morna: Finn the king of the glittering blades of war!!”

DIALOGUE BETWEEN OISIN AND ST. PATRICK.

[In a dissertation on the Æra of Ossian, prefixed to Macpherson's work, reference is thus made to *a* Dialogue (in *what* language written the writer of the dissertation carefully avoids mentioning), "It was with one of the Culdees that Ossian, in his extreme old age, is said to have disputed concerning the Christian religion. The dispute, they say, is extant, and is couched in verse, according to the custom of the times. * * * The dispute bears the genuine marks of antiquity. The obsolete phrases and expressions peculiar to the time prove it to be no forgery."

The *positive* assertions in the two last quoted sentences contrast strangely the *doubtful* "they say" in the one given just before; the motive which prompted the writer to use "they say" is transparent—he might have been asked to produce the MS, or point out where it was to be seen, and it would have been rather an awkward disclosure for him if it should have been discovered to be in the *Irish* language—the *positive* assertions were admitted owing, doubtless, to the confusion of intellect which might be expected, as the result of persistence in habits of literary deception. Equally obvious is the reason why

the Dialogue is spoken of as one between Ossian and a Culdee, instead of between Ossian and St. Patrick.

From the peasantry of Mayo I obtained more than one version of many parts of this dialogue. The one here given is a translation of a MS, procured in county Kerry by Mr. J. O'Sullivan (now residing in Stirling), with very slight alterations, in three or four places only, and the omission of altogether about 100 stanza's, some of the omitted verses being too coarse for ears or eyes polite, whilst others are simply tedious repetitions.]

P. Oisin, long is thy slumber, arise and listen to the psalm;* forsaken is thy activity, forsaken thy strength, yet wouldst thou delight in battle and in wild uproar.

O. My swiftness and my strength have deserted me since the Fenii, with Fionn their chief, are no longer alive; for clerks I have no attachment, and their melodies are not sweet to me.

Patrick, I have heard melody better than your music, great though it be; the mocking ripple of the rivulet, the roaring of the calves, these were the music of the Fenii.

* As handed down in Mayo, the Dialogue opens thus:—

O.—Patrick of the solemn psalms, how great your love for God must be, since you do not close your book and listen to the voice of the blackbird!

Sweet blackbird, high on your bending bough, how soothing is your song! although you never heard mass said by priests, how delightfully you do whistle!

I have not heard music so good as this of nature from the beginning of the great world up to this time ; I am aged, gloomy, and grey-headed, and my regard is not towards the clerks on hills.*

O Patrick, hard is thy service, and shameful is it for you to reproach me for my appearance ; if Fionn lived, and the Fenii, I would forsake the clergy of the cross.

The small dwarf who attended Fionn had paltry bones ; yet he played melodiously on the harp, whilst I am here in grief with the clergy.

Fionn had twelve dogs ; when he let them hunt through the glen they were more melodious than the singing birds, or anything to be found from the Suir out.

When Fionn the breaker of hosts would sit on the hill and play the *Dord-Fhian*,† ah, my grief ! he was more musical than clergy.

* The first missionaries took possession of the groves, cells, and high places of the druids ; the places to which the pagans had been accustomed to resort.

† *Dord-Fhian*, supposed to have been an instrument producing a humming sound (*dord* means hum), probably made out of a shell.

I have a small story to tell of Fionn—there were only twelve men of us, and we made a prisoner of Saxon, king of chiefs; we made war on the king of Greece.*

We conquered the entire west with all its strength and power: the kingdoms of Lochland† and the great country sent gold to the mansion of the Fenii.

Since Christ there is none to compare with Fionn, I see no king above him: woe is me that I live after them, for I have no love for bells and music.

Departed are the days when I advanced with the hosts, alas! 'tis a pity for me to be alive:

* “ Besides their standing armies, we find the Irish kept up a considerable naval force, whereby, from time to time, they poured troops into Britain and Gaul, which countries they long kept under contribution. * * * Their migrations from Egypt to Greece, and from thence to Spain, have also been doubted, from the supposed difficulty of obtaining shipping; whilst at the same period of time no objections have been made to the accounts of the Phœnicians, the Syrians, and after them, the Greeks, having very considerable fleets, and making very distant settlements.” O'Hall's *Introduction to His. and Antiq. of Ireland* p. 125.

† *Lochland*; this means, land of lakes: under this name the whole of Scandinavia was included.

though great my strength once and powerful, now I am weak, alas ! oh alas !

When I think of the men who were so brave I feel cheerless ; without friendship for my heart, in want of meat, in want of drink, the three things I always practised.

I was ever with friendship ; nimble my actions in athletic sports : and now here I am weak, living after the Fenii and Fionn MacCumhal.

Patrick, pray thou to the God of heaven for Fionn of the Fenii and for his children, making entreaty for the prince, whose equal I have never heard of.

P. O learned man, I desire not strife with thee, but I will not make request to heaven for Fionn, for all the actions of his life were to be in love and to urge the sounding chase.

O. If you were to be in company with the Fenii, O clerk of clergy and of bells,* not for long

* “ Small bells, (such, we mean, as were appended to the tunic of the Jewish high priest, and afterwards employed by the Greeks and Romans, for various religious purposes, but particularly to frighten ghosts and demons from their temples,)

wouldst thou be able to give heed to the God of truth, and serve the clergy.

P. He would not forsake me, the son of God eternal, in whose cause I have travelled east and west. Oisin the remainder of your life is short, and badly will you fare if you despise the clergy.

O. Small is my esteem for thyself and clergy, O holy Patrick of the crozier : I have greater regard for Fionn, the white-handed king of the Fenii, but he is not near to me now.

Mournful I am without his hounds bounding, and his dogs all around me ; if they and their agile hero were alive, Patrick, you would have to fear rebuke from me.

P. In that way did you and the Fenii of Erin forsake heaven : you never submitted to religion,

—were undoubtedly introduced with Christianity into this kingdom ; being then universally, as now, tingled occasionally at the altars of the Roman Catholics, by the officiating priest. Their use among the Christian clergy is supposed to be coeval with their religion ; and the missionaries who were sent to convert the pagan Irish, would not omit bringing with them an appendage of their profession which is still thought so necessary." *Hist. Mem. of the Irish Bards.*

but ever put confidence in strength of limbs, and in battles.

O. Were Fionn alive, and the Fenii comely and warlike, with their hounds running propitiously, they would seem to me more majestic than those who dwell in heaven.

P. Desolate are the Fenii, without slumber or liberty in the house of torment, for never in any way did they render service to the Holy Father.

O. Beloved by Fionn of the heroes was the baying of hounds on the mountain Con Alfa; his delight was in sailing out of harbours, and in assemblage of hosts.

Fionn delighted in strokes upon shields, in conquering heroes, and hunting on hills; the sound of his dogs in toil was more melodious to me than the preaching of clerks in church of bells.

P. Delightful certainly was the companionship of Fionn, but you need not regard him any longer: he is not alive now, and you Oisín have not long to live.

It is because his time and delight were taken

up by pleasures of the chase, and the array of warlike hosts; and because he never thought about God, that Fionn of the Fenii is in thralldom.

He is now shut up in torment; all his generosity and wealth do not avail him now, for lack of piety towards God:—for this he is in sorrow, in the mansion of pain.

O. Little do I believe in thy speech, thou man from Rome with white books, that Fionn the generous hero is now with demons and devils.

Is Fionn in hell at hand, the hero mild who bestowed gold! in forfeit for sins against the great God, is *he* in the house of torment under sorrow?

If the children of Morni were inside, or the children of Boisgne, the men of might, forth from thence would they bring Fionn, or else they would have the house to themselves.

P. If the three provinces of Erin were seven times greater than they are, and if the seven battalions of the Fenii were to assist the inhabitants, they would not fetch Fionn out, although their strength and power are great.

O. If Faolan and Gaul now survived, Diar-

muid of the dark-brown locks, and Osgur the valiant, demon nor Deity could keep Fionn of the Fenii in bondage.*

P. Were Faolan alive and Gaul, and those who came on earth at same time with them, they would not bring Fionn out from the house in which he is yielding pain.

O. If these and Fionn the king were for a time as they were wont to be, no created hell, no heaven would be able to keep them under locks.

Is Fionn in locks, in bonds, condemned to torments, in possession of tears! † great as you say

* As I had this discourse from an old woman called *Mary of the verses*, living on the shores of Lough Mask, in county Mayo, who is more than 100 years old, this passage concludes, “if one spark of hell’s fire were to touch the ever disputing Conan, he would bring out the forge of hell on his shoulders.”

† This passage was repeated to me differently by an old man: he gives it thus,—“Shall the *cold floor of hell*, &c. The expression, *cold floor*, shows how old the traditionary song is, for the hell of the Druids was in every respect the reverse of their heaven; they called it *ifurin*, which means *isle of the cold climate*; and this notion of hell prevailed among Celtic nations: the sun was the emblem of their divinity, and they naturally made *cold*, or *absence of sun*, the distinguishing mark of the place of bad spirits. “Every country has made its future punishment consist in the ag-

may be their (demons') might, yet could not they retain the Fenii.

I do not believe it possible for God, though great His power and His strength, nor for any devil who came ever, to put under lock Fionn of the Fenii.

Many battles were won by Fionn, stronger he than God in heaven ; he did not yield, for he was higher than any king who came since Christ, or than any who were before him.

P. Necessity was on Fionn to submit to God, as is needful for all in the world : and now he is in the hell of torments, giving satisfaction vehemently for his sins.

O. O Patrick, doleful is the story :—Fionn the gregate of all those evils which seemed to it the most grievous and terrible in this world. Hence in climates so disagreeably hot as to incommode the inhabitants, such as in parts of Asia, Africa, and other eastern countries, men placed the seat of their hell in extreme heat, long before they had any express revelation concerning its nature. The Celtic tribes, on the other hand, who were spread over the most of Europe, as well as the more northern country of the Scythians, feeling more inconvenience from cold than from heat, placed the seat of their hell in the midst of eternal frosts and colds, being the idea they most abhorred." Vide *Travels of a British Druid*.

hospitable to be under locks ! heart without malice and without aversion, heart stern in defence of battle.

P. However great the number of troops fighting for Fionn, he did not act the will of God above : his crimes are above him in pains of fire, for ever in anguish.

O. It is plain that your God does not delight in giving gold and food to others : Fionn never refused strong or weak, and shall he receive hell for his abode !!!

P. However much he may have divided gold and venison, hard are his bonds in the den of pains : no glimpse of light for him, no sight of brightness such as he first received from God.

O. Fionn was accustomed to sight of brightness, in a place made pleasant by harp, and even if he *is* in dark-countenanced hell, not great will be his regard for devils' torments.

O Patrick, sad is my narration ; I am weak since my companions are gone, listening to clergy of the bells, and I am an old bard, poor and blind.

Patrick, inquire of God if He remembers the Fenii when alive ; ask if, east or west, He ever saw men better in conflict.

Or did He observe in His own country, although it is high above us, for sense, for conflict, or for strength, any man good in comparison with Fionn ?

Better was one single combat in which Fionn fought, than the love of God in heaven, and better than thou thyself, O clerk.

Patrick, I am wretched, a poor bard, ever changing residence, without power, without activity, without force, journeying to mass and altars.

Without good food, without getting wealth and booty, without play in athletic games ; without going a-wooing and hunting, two objects for which I always longed.

Without reciting deeds of champions, without bearing spear ; alas ! I have lost Osgur and Fionn, and I am left standing like a withered tree, out under injury.

P. Cease, O Bard ! Leave off thy folly ; you have as yet said but little in favour of yourself :

think of the torments that await you; the Fenii are departed, and ere long you will go likewise.

O. I reflect more upon the court of Fionn where the banquets were well flavoured, and where melody sounded, than upon trespasses and sins, as many as I have now committed and as are yet before me.

P. Where Fionn's court was, O Oisin of wicked'acts! there now grow the green nettles, and he himself with his warlike bands, are in hell's eternal torture.

O. I will not obey you, O Patrick, though great your creed and faith; I own without lie that firm is my belief that with the devil will be your portion.

Alas! my valiant Osgur was slain by the spear of Cairbre; if he were now with me here there would be small liberty of speech for *thee*.

P. Oisin, believe what I tell you—Osgur is condemned to bondage, without leave to speak or to slumber; pains and dangers are punishing him.

O. Pains of hell and excess of darkness be on thyself and on thy clergy; henceforth say not to me that Osgur of the sword is in bondage.

If there *are* devils in hell, and if the Fenii *are* together there, it is not possible that victory in battle can be obtained over the strength of Osgur and of Fionn.

I would rather return to the Fenii once more, O Patrick, if they were alive, than go to the heaven of Jesus Christ, to be for ever under tribute to Him.

P. O withered Bard, thou art foolish: thou wouldst not pay tribute to any one if thou wast in the heaven of Jesus Christ, nor wouldst thou witness battle and uproar.

O. I would rather be in Fionn's court, harkening to the voices of hounds every morning, and meditating on hard-fought battles, than in the court of Jesus Christ; that is certain.

P. Better for thee to receive for one day food of glory from God, than all the good of the world that ever thou didst receive from the Fenii.

O. It was easier for me to obtain without fail both meat and drink in Fionn's court, than in thy mansion, and in the dwelling of the Son of God, O Patrick, not generous in dividing.

P. Shame upon thee, thou hoary-headed Bard, not to know that it is the King of heaven who gave food to Fionn himself and to all the Fenii of Erin.

O. Patrick, I will not submit to thy words, that it was God who nourished Fionn : it was the strength of his own arm, the thrust of his sword, and abundance of plunder gained through mastery of the billows.

P. It is God who provided each prey, and who created the sea though powerful its waves, and therefore, strange Oisin, with Him is strength and power over the world.

O. Never did Fionn, the brave hero, count out tribute to God ; he never paid it to any one in this life, and he will not in the next life either.

P. Now is Fionn the white-handed placed by God amongst the devils, and although once great his strength to rely upon, he is weak now in the country of pains.

O. My affliction and my grief I own ! not that myself or Fionn would ever have any regard for devils, however hideous their appearance.

P. It is better for thee to be with me and the clergy, as thou art, than to be with Fionn and the Fenii, for they are in hell without order for release.

O. By thy book and its meaning, by thy crozier and by thy image, better were it for me to share their torments, rather than be among the clergy continually talking.

P. Thou hast spoken words of folly, O Bard, thou art grey-headed^s and weak : if for one twinkle of the eye thou wast there, long and wearisome would seem the delay.

O. One day only, in company with clergy of the bells, is longer to me than if I were to be in hell of torments as long as God shall be in heaven.

If my foot is on the brink of the grave, and death coming quickly as my lot ; unless I received help from the Fenii I should feel small hope of rescue.

If my eyes are without vision, and my limbs without agility and strength, I have no desire to remain with thee, nor with the clergy, nor with Jesus Christ.

If I am without speed, without vigour, unable to bear spear in commencement of battle ; small is my love for thee and for thy clergy ; more friendly to me the devil.

P. Oisin, this is not melodious discourse ; thou wast haughty and strong once : it is lamentable that, though near thy life's end, thou dost oppose heaven.

Straight the forfeit will be upon thee, in that thou dost resist heaven, alas, the day ! it is piteous to sell gentle heaven freely for a den of devils.

Thy locks are hoary without worth, pitiful to behold is thy countenance bereft of affection ; thy mouth which uttered truthful story aloud is now cold in its action.

Thine eyes are unable to discern the way ; formerly they flashed with madness in stern conflicts : thy hands, of victorious strokes once, are without play, without hardness, without vigour.

O. Son of Alphruin of the wise words, woe is me that I am near the clergy of the bells ! for a time I lived with Caoilte and then we were not poor.

P. That was when fleets were collected in the harbours, and the chase was urged over the rugged hills : he received hell in the end, the shadow of your wicked religion.

O. Ah ! Patrick, your religion may be great ; but I have not, up to this day, witnessed among ye dinner nor banquet like banquet of the Fenii.

P. Although Fionn spent generously all that he obtained by strength, fleetness, and plunder ; he is now sorrowful in the mansion of a lord who furnishes no dinner ; and demons torment him for ever.

O. It would be pitiful and mournful, if thy story were true, oh Patrick ! for all the saints who are in heaven, if they were to strive with Fionn in contest of liberality, could not obtain the victory over him.

* * * * *

O. Tell to me without controversy, what is the reason of the custom you have to be ever beating your breasts, and each evening kneeling under gloom ?

P. I tell to thee that it is not because we have scarcity of food and of drink that we are under

armour (watching), but because we desire to be perpetually on our guard against gluttony.

O. It is not for fear of gluttony, nor in dread of king of saints that I receive for myself scarcity of bread, but because I am not able to obtain it from the clergy.

Astonishment is upon me to witness the greatness of your love for the man you call Christ, if hereafter he will perpetually upbraid you for the abundance of your portions and of your drink !

Farewell to Fionn of the noble Fenii ; with him was ample banquet and division ; he was not like the man who is called God ; and moreover he gave without waiting for remuneration.

He frequently distributed without stint much wine and flesh among the Fenii ; never at any time did I witness him asking for kneeling and bitter weeping.

My grief ! this night I am left by the Fenii, as a remnant under sorrow ; waiting for bread from the clergy, and from the Son of God who gives it to them.

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P. O Oisin, silly is it of me to be talking with thee, and I deem it frenzy ; all who ever came, or who shall come hereafter, except God, will not put the demons under subjection ; do not imagine it.

O. It is known to me that the Fenii fought, on this western hill, a battle greater than ever was fought either in heaven or in hell, from the beginning of the world to this day.

P. Describe to me, Oisin gracious, in what way the battle commenced ; and relate in turn the deeds of the champions, powerful, brave and active, who fell in the conflict.

THE BATTLE OF THE HILL OF SLAUGHTER.

We were all, Fionn and the Fenii, assembled on this western hill ; striving in athletic games, joyful, pleasant, and feasting at banquets.

Soon, however, the Druid * Teabhrach said cau-

* The word *Druid* is not derived from Drus, Greek for an oak, but from the Irish word *Draoid*, signifying a cunning

tiously, "I fear, O king of the Fenii! that ere long the sea shall give a cause of gloom to thee."

"What is this?" replied Fionn, "by what omen dost thou perceive our cause of sorrow? There is no people under the sun unfriendly to the Fenii at this time."

"Believe me, O Fionn of the steel sword, that thy pursuers are close at hand:—behold the broken clouds, vacant yonder, threatening sorrowfully side by side."

Fionn looked above him, and saw a dread omen of blood; said he, "I fear that soon will be slaughter of the Fenii."

Called Fionn to him Osgur, and said, "O champion of the sharp sword, need hast thou of stout heart; look upon the appearances of the air."

man, or Magus, and implying so fully all that is denoted by the latter designation as to have been used as an equivalent for it in an Irish version of the Gospel of St. Matthew, where, instead of "the wise men, or Magi, came from the East," it is rendered, "the Druids came from the East;" in like manner, in Exodus vii. 11, the words, "magicians of Egypt" are made "Druids of Egypt." Vide *Moore's History of Ireland*, vol. i. c. 3.

“O king of the Fenii,” spoke Osgur, “let not tremour nor weakness seize thee; strength and speed are in thy limbs; thy heavy forces are mighty by thy side.”

For a time we all remained keenly beholding the clouds; some of us were pleased and others gloomy in appearance.

Spoke Conan with loud voice and said fiercely, “From myself I declare that, no man has changed appearance but he who is a weak coward.”

“O Fionn son of Cumhal,” said the Druid, “gather thy forces around thee, and divide them into two equal bands that they may keep watch upon thy foes.”

Sounded Fionn the Dord-Fhiann, and answered the summons each man, with speed approaching the hero of mighty chiefs.

Said Fionn, “Let each troop remain that is friendly to me; the one that bears ill will towards me, let it gainsay my gentle language.”

“O Osgur, in beginning of battle thou art the

defender, buckler and vigour of the Fenii, wilt thou till morning watch for the coming of the enemy?"

"I should wish to ask thee O Fionn, why there is not to be deep slumber? if thou *hast* dread because of the troops coming over the sea, it is not good for our fame to be deprived of sleep."

"Not by *fear* of others should we be deprived of slumber; but thou knowest that I have second sight when painful affliction is at hand."

Called Fionn on Diarmuid Donn, and gently inquired of the valiant man, "Wilt thou watch together with Osgur, is there friendship for me with thee and the others?"

"Never yet O Fionn, was I in battle of great severity, in company with Osgur the secret of my heart, without a victorious ending."

"O Gaul,* valiant, of the steel sword, is thy speech agreeing with the Fenii? wilt thou stay in company of the two of mighty acts and boisterous battles?"

* Gaul was said to be of the blood-royal of the Tuatha-de-Danaan princes. *Moore*

“No fear have I of severe hand of enemy, since Osgur of the perilous deeds is at hand and Diarmuid the valiant and high-minded—we do not grudge to thee thy slumber till the morning.”

Came Faolan in presence of Fionn, and as if in wrath spoke with loud voice, “O king terrible of the Fenii, I shall be with you for ever.”

“O Conan Maol,”* spoke Fionn, “stay thou in the evil caves, broad and high, since thou art loudest in melodious cry to shout if the enemy is approaching.”

“If I go to the cave, to look out for affliction or spoilers at hand, alone, by myself, without others of the Fenii, may I be pierced through the middle of my body.”

“It is not fit for thee O Conan Maol,” replied Mac Luig, “to refuse obedience to Fionn king over the Fenii, who provides us with food and with gold.”

“If Fionn is king and chief, O son of black

* Maol, Irish for bald. The character of Conan resembles that of Thersytes in Homer; insolent perverseness, cowardice, and boastfulness being ever uppermost.

Luig, it is not plain that I must go by myself to the cave broad and high."

Replied Mac Luig, "There is none of all the Fenii who can shout as sweetly as you, and if the pursuers come near thy side thy voice will be heard by all the Fenii."

"Speak no longer to me, O son of Luig of the smooth limbs, for Fionn nor for the Fenii I go not to the cave; I refuse to do so whilst I have life."

"Go there O Conan," said Osgur, "and take with thee little Hugh in thy company, Fearran, Sgeollan, and swift Bran,* Bogleim, Fuaim, and Meargam."

Conan went by advice of Osgur, and began his journey to the cave; the hounds and little Hugh, son of Fionn, followed close in his steps.

Fionn then retired to sleep, and not long was he in tranquil slumber when, in a vision, there came before him little Hugh Fionn's son headless.

After that there was shown unto him Gaul the

* *Sgeolan* and *Bran* were the favourite hounds of Fionn, and of their sagacity, swiftness and attachment, frequent mention is made in the Fenian poems.

valiant, in conflict with a champion truly powerful, brave, who was named Tailc son of Trean.

With a start he awakened out of his sleep, and called to him the learned man of the Fenii, whose name was Druid of logic, or the man of caution.

To him Fionn unfolded his vision in its double apparition, and said, "The cause and the reason thereof declare now without delay."

"An invasion upon the Fenii O Fionn, *that* is the danger ; but the two thou hast named shall not be wounded, nor Gaul noble and valiant, nor little Hugh Fionn's son."

Thus spake the druid, nor long did we remain ere there arose a loud shout; sounded Fionn the Dord-Fhiann; violently they answered the strain so far-sounding yet so gentle.

Came Conan in his excessive running, and after him the hounds in full speed; little Hugh remained at the entrance to the cave waiting for the clang of shields.

Sounded Fionn the Dord Fhiann, before came near to them Conan Maol. "What is this" said

Osgur, "the pursuers are at hand, and where is little Hugh?"

"At the mouth of the cave stood little Hugh, at the time I departed myself with speed: not behind me did I look, nor is Hugh to me a treasure."

"Who *is* a treasure to thee?" replied Osgur, "O senseless, tedious, bald Conan, is Fionn the leader of heroes, or myself; or who of all the hosts of the Fenii?"

"No treasure to me is Fionn, nor art thou; neither should I grieve after ye, although I desire good for ye all: I should not sorrow for ye all, but for myself."

Ran Osgur with mighty speed till he came to the entrance of the cave; there he found little Hugh son of Fionn the generous, without weakness, without deadly wound, without fear.

"For what reason O little Hugh, dost thou unwisely watch when the bald man has departed, and the foe is near to thee in his encampments? O youth know that tender is thy age."

"Though the enemy is near to me, and I am

beyond the help of the Fenii, not foolish is my mind nor my heart, to tremble because of strokes upon shields."

My sadness ! my ruin ! and my lamentation !
O Patrick, thou who art humble before God, if little Hugh himself were alive with me he would change to gloom the clamour of the clergy.

P. Relate to me, Oisin, son of Fionn, the conclusion of the battle on this western hill ; little Hugh lives not near to thee, so never heed the actions of the clergy.

O. Hill of slaughter ; thus shall this western hill be called until the judgment day ; O Patrick of the white crozier, not without cause was the name given it.

P. Be not faint-hearted, generous Oisin, reflecting on the woes of the Fenii ; they are all departed, and all who then were alive are naught now ; but God lives.

O. Still exists Fionn of the Fenii, still exists Diarmuid Donn, still exists Osgur of the sword and all who there fought—but bald Conan alone.

P. Fionn is nought; so are Diarmuid Donn, and valiant Osgur, as well as all the Fenii: they are not alive now like the God of grace.

O. O Patrick, it is plain that not in time of the Fenii did that man, thy God, live; for if he had been in the east or in the west the Fenii would have cut off his head.

P. God was alive in the time of the Fenii: He lives and shall live without death; He is not to be compared with the Fenii, oh thou beggar!

O. O Patrick, if thy speech is true that the Fenii really did receive death; let me not hear thee saying for ever that it was God who gained the victory over them.

P. The Fenii and their deeds were good, courteous Oisín, but this alone:—they did not worship the only true God. And now proceed with the Hill of Slaughter.

O. Marched then towards the Fenii Osgur and little Hugh bearing him company: more lovely to us was the coming of the pair than the presence of the faithful king of grace.

Fionn inquired of valiant Osgur, if he had perceived signs of the active heroes? He said that he beheld them, and that their approach was towards the Fenii.

Thus we remained till morning, nor did we perceive the approach of the enemy. O Patrick, my story is sorrowful!! Not long was it ere we were in a pass of difficulty.

TAILC SON OF TREAN INVADES ERIN.

Early in the morning we arose, Erin's Fenii, not given to subtlety: on this side the hosts assembled, nor was it wonderful that they marched with haughtiness.

The Fenii perceived a woman, more beautiful than the sun, coming to them over the plain: and to Fionn son of Cumhal she made salutation.

Said Fionn, "Who art thou, O queen of loveliest mien and most beautiful form? the sound of thy voice is more melodious to me than the strains of music."

"BEAUTIFUL-YOUNG-FACE is my name, I am the

daughter of Garra son of Dolluir Dian ; he is the chief king of Greece ; my curse be upon him, for it is he who has awarded me to Tailc mac Trean."

" Why dost thou avoid him ? keep it not secret from me. I take thy hand, and no man shall snatch thee from me."

" Not without cause is my hate upon him : his face is the colour of coal ; two ears, tail, and the head of a cat are on him, and not good is their beauty."

" I have ranged the world three times, have told my story to each king and lord but thee, but never did they give ear to my plaint."

" Young maiden I shall keep thee," replied the son of Cumhal, who never was conquered, " till the seven battalions of the Fenii shall have fallen in thy defence."

" By thine own hand O Fionn, I fear that thou dost speak rashly ; for by him from whom I fly there will fall, not seven but a hundred battalions."

" Fear not on account of his feats of arms, thou wreathed-with-golden-coloured-hair ; there lives

not under the sun the hero whose match I cannot find among the Fenii."

Soon we saw coming towards us the king of men, cat-headed, of severe hands; he saluted not neither did he humble himself before Fionn; he demanded battle and his wife.

We sent ten hundred champions to meet him in fight; strong of hand were they in midst of strife; none of them returned; they fell all by Tailc son of the mighty.

Of our men there fell prostrate ten hundred knights * bulky and warlike: O Patrick of the strict faith, those men were the pride of the Fenii.

Osgur asked leave from Fionn (mournful to me was his speech) to go and engage with the man, when he beheld the loss of the host.

Replied Fionn, "that thou shalt obtain from me; though doleful to me would be thy fall; go, and take my blessing; remember thy prowess and thy deeds."

* The ancient inhabitants of Gaul had at least *one* order of knighthood before they were engaged in war with the Romans: mention has already been made of the old Irish knights.

Osgur arose—the man of valour on whose hand never was wound inflicted, the mighty champion of perfect training,—and came before Tailc son of Trean.

“ Turn thy countenance towards me, oh Tailc son of Trean,” said generous Osgur, “ for I will cut off from thee thy head, in return for the number of men wounded by thy hand.”

For five days and five nights were the two who were not languid in battle, without food, without drink, without slumber, till Tailc fell conquered by my son.

We raised aloud three shouts after the conflict stern and keen ; a shout of lamentation for the Fenii who had fallen, and two shouts of joy because of the death of Tailc.

Beautiful-young-face did not live after she beheld the greatness of the slaughter ; shame took possession of her pure-coloured cheek ; she fell down dead in the midst of the others.

MEARGACH COMES TO ERIN, DEMANDING OF FIONN, SON OF CUMHAL, SATISFACTION FOR THE DEATH OF TAILC MAC TREAN.

Not long did we remain—neither pleasant were we nor joyful—before there approached us a mighty champion of callous actions.

He did not salute the Fenii, neither did he bow to Fionn, but inquired in most haughty tone, “Where is your defence and your lord?”

“Who art thou thyself, O valiant champion?” replied little Hugh, whose heart was not affrighted; “What causes this excursion of thine? How long is thy journey when thou departest from us?”

“I shall not yield tidings at all to thee, O child of tender age; to none will I give knowledge of my secret till I have conversed with Fionn.”

“I will make known to thee where Fionn is, O learned champion of smooth limbs; not far from us the place where he is, on the hill where Taile was slain.”

Moved little Hugh before him with speed, the

champion following closely, till they reached the plain of slaughter on which lay in death the body of Tailc Mac Trean.

When the Fenii and Fionn observed the coming of the two, said the druid, "I fear that not for long shall the son of Cumhal be joyful."

"This is Fionn," said little Hugh, "to him explain thy request; but more costly to thee shall be his challenge than that of any hero under the sun, if evil is thy secret."

"Art thou Fionn?" said the brave man; "if thou dost not show thyself perfect as a graceful hero thou shalt be charmed till judgment day: was it not thou who conquered Tailc Mac Trean?"

"Not by victory of my own hands fell the man whom thou callest Tailc Mac Trean; tell me first thy own surname, and thou shalt obtain distinct knowledge of the matter."

"MEARGACH stern, of the GREEN BLADE,* is

* The *green* blade most likely is a sword of mixed metals; many weapons have been found in the Irish bogs made of copper mixed with other minerals. "What makes these brazen swords such a valuable remnant to the Irish antiqua-

my surname, O Fionn MacCumhal ; in my blood was weapon never reddened yet, and none is able to put me to flight."

Came Osgur at the sound of voices, and the lion inquired without fear, "Is it by victory of thy hand and of thy sword that never hast thou yet been wounded?"

"There is not a hero above the sword who has—however powerful his deeds of arms—in battle, or in conflict's wild uproar, wounded me with weapons."

rian is, they serve to corroborate the opinion that the Phœnicians once had footing in this kingdom."—*Campbell's Phil. Survey of South of Ireland*. Pownal, in 1774, stated to the Society of Antiquarians that some swords found in Ireland "are as exactly and as minutely to every apparent mark the same with the swords of Sir W. Hamilton's collection, now in the British Museum, as if they came out of the same armoury. These swords (in the British Museum) were found in the field of Cannæ, and are said to be Carthaginian; the swords dug up by the Irish, by parity of reasoning, may likewise be said to have been of the same people." The Gauls are said to have carried *green-headed* partisans; an old Irish poet says,

"Two thousand and two hundred of the Gauls,
With broad *green* partisans of polished steel,
Landed at Wexford." &c. &c.

“Thou wilt not long be so,” said valiant Osgur, “unless thy arrival be friendly to the Fenii; O Meargach stern, of the Green Blade, wounded shalt thou be doubtless, even to thy liver.”

“Knight, in form thou art a graceful hero, but thy words I look upon as only noise; great as is your activity, and great as is the strength of the Fenii, thou wilt fall and they by my hand.”

“Unless thou hast other power* than victory

* Osgur by “other power” means necromancy or enchantment. The Tuatha de Danans were feared on account of their diabolical charms more than for their bravery. These Danans learnt magic charms in Greece, and after their expulsion from Greece went to Norway; in that country they remained some time:—

“The kind Norwegians received the strangers,
And hospitably lodged them from the cold.
But when they saw their necromantic art,
How they had fiends and spectres at command,
And from the tombs could call the stalking ghosts,
And mutter words, and summon hideous forms
From hell, and from the bottom of the deep,
They thought them gods, and not of mortal race.”

Book of Invasions.

From Norway the Danans went to Scotland, taking with them four choice monuments of antiquity, of which the most noted was the *Liafail*, or stone of destiny; from this stone Ireland at one time was called *Inisfail*, the Danans brought it to Ireland after remaining in Scotland for seven

of arms, strength of hands, and courage of body, I give thee my hand in pledge that I will wound thee through the middle of thy heart."

"Reveal to me, O son of valiant Cumhal, as thou didst promise at first, by whom or in what manner fell Taile Mac Trean in his strength and first vigour."

"Taile, son of mighty Trean, fell by the conquering strength of valiant Osgur's hand; but first there fell by the sword of Taile ten hundred of the Fenii of Erin."

"Was it not disgrace for thee, O Fionn, to suffer the queen of fairest fame to be put to death by the Fenii? her fall is fatal to the men of Erin."

"I nor any one else of the Fenii gave knowledge of death to the lady; but, when she saw the destruction of the hosts, she went to the shades of sorrow.

years. When they came upon the coast of Erin "they had recourse to their enchantments to screen themselves from the observation of the inhabitants; and accordingly by their magic skill they formed a mist about themselves for three days and three nights." &c. &c.—*Keating's Hist. of Ireland.*

“Now if thou seekest conflict because of the fall of Tailé and his wife, thou shalt fight with a man of the Fenii, or else depart modestly with a gift.”

“Although my heavy forces are behind me on the neighbouring hill, I will not ask their help, O Fionn; and of ye all I will leave but two men alive.”

“Who are those two thou wilt leave alive, O Meargach of the hosts?” replied Fionn; “it is wonderful to me how thou trustest in thy strength to give us death!”

“Know that all shall perish except thyself, and Hugh, thy son; I will not leave this hill till I have taken vengeance upon ye all for the dead who were my friends.”

“Is it not sufficient for thee, O Meargach, of the Green Blade, if two of the Fenii fall on account of him; must the remaining men engage in conflict, when so many valiant heroes fell by his hand?”

“O Fionn, son of Cumhal, two or three would not satisfy my vengeance on account of his death;

were the Fenii twice as numerous as they are it is likely they would all fall by my hand."

"Don't imagine in thy pride that I would permit two or three of the Fenii to fall by thy hands, in revenge for the death of Taile and his wife," replied Fionn.

"As mighty as are your hands and your deeds, and as numerous as are the bands of your valiant men, I shall not forsake you till I have revenge for the early death of Taile son of Trean."

"O Patrick! I will not conceal it from thee—faintness seized Fionn and the Fenii, except alone Osgur of the strokes, who never trembled before man."

"O Meargach stern, of the Green Blade," spoke Fionn firmly, in boisterous tones, "single combat shalt thou receive from the Fenii, and others beside thyself, without falsehood."

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"In the morning," said Meargach, "let there be ready for me the champion who is strongest and most swift of the Fenii, in his arms and

armour before me, without treachery ; let our deeds be in presence of all."

Meargach of the Green Blade went, nor stayed in his course till he reached the head of his army. Fionn sent and called together the Fenii, and rehearsed the amount of the danger.

He then made seven battalions of them, and to each division he appointed its place ; " Listen to my voice," said he, " short distance is the danger from us."

He spake in the beginning to the FIRST MEN called the COURAGEOUS HEROES, and of them he inquired with voice resounding, whether they would always fight in his cause ?

With one voice they answered Fionn, that they would fight continually in his cause. The BATTALION OF THE CHIEFS also said the same, for that they would follow the order of the FIRST HANDS.

Said the battalion of the MAGNANIMOUS MEN, " In battle or in disturbance of the fiercest form we have never forsaken our valiant king, and like the rest, we will not forsake him for ever."

Said the battalion of the BULWARK MEN, that they would not withdraw : and the brigade of the MEN OF HOPE likewise that they would follow him perpetually.

Replied the brigade of the LITTLE MEN—the brigade that was called the *Remnant*, that they were themselves faithful in their deeds, on battle-field equal to the rest.

He then called Osgur to him—he was best in the beginning of strife ; alas !—and asked if he would be the first to fight in single combat with Meargach ?

Osgur answered that he himself would give battle to him in behalf of the Fenii, “and if I fall O Fionn,” said he, “it is probable that danger will await thee thereafter.”

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Fionn called Gaul, of valiant strength and direst deeds with spear and sword ; he inquired of him if he would wage battle with Meargach mighty, of the treacherous deeds ?

“O Fionn” said Gaul briskly, keenly, “it is true I am not beloved by thee ; thou desirest to

put me in danger, that Osgur from the conflict may be free."

"I promised that not without thine own will would I put thee in jeopardy on my account; the others engaged to fight; disgraceful is it for thee to resist."

"I promised thee O Fionn, truly, that like the others I would not shrink from thy cause; nor remain away from the battle, if each man of my companions puts his hand to it."

Then Fionn called on Diarmuid Donn and gently inquired of him if he would give battle, single-handed, to Meargach the mighty in deeds?

"Never will I engage with stern Meargach, of the Green Blade; but O Fionn, if the strife is universal, myself shall be as bold as anyone there."

Inquired he of Faolan with loud voice, if he was willing to make valiant fight with him? Replied Faolan to Fionn of the Fenii, "Not for long wouldst thou grieve for me."

"I thought," said princely Fionn, "that not such as this was thy promise to us;" said Faolan,

“ Whatsoever I promised, from my former saying I shall not withdraw.”

He inquired from man to man, if they would go to oppose him in single combat? replied each one of the great brigade, “ we do refuse thee.”

Inquired he in like manner, if there was in the hearing of the men of powerful hands, a man who would give battle hand to hand with bold Meargach of the Green Blade?

They all replied with one voice, that no man was so impetuous as to agree to do so; but that in company of each other they would speedily descend to the battle; mighty as were the heavy forces of the foe.

He spake to them from battalion to battalion, and of them all he found not one man willing to engage with Meargach, till he came to the men of the REMNANT.

To the chief of the REMNANT spoke Fionn; vehemently the chief accepted the battle; each man even to the last declared that he would without flinching follow Caoinleath.

Fionn and valiant Osgur raised the joyful shout, proclaiming aloud—that the Remnant had accepted the battle, whilst the six other mighty battalions had refused.

Then we all went to seek slumber, but our rest till morn was not sweet; early in the morning we stood forth; nor was it long ere we saw our foes.

Caoinleath took shield and weapons and powerfully struck the signal of battle; Meargach of the Green Blade came to us, and his troops suddenly on the ground.

Meargach of the Green Blade inquired of Fionn son of Cumhal, with hasty rage and in sullen voice, “Is this thy champion for the fight who is in armour of battle, and in stern array?”

Said generous Fionn, “Truly it is only hardy Caoinleath of the Remnant, it was not meet for anyone else of the Fenii to engage thee in single combat.”

“I shall send, O Fionn, to encounter him, a man like himself in appearance: they shall fight together stroke for stroke,” said powerful Meargach of the Green Blade.

Meargach called on a man of his own whose surname was Donn Dorchan ; then the two attacked each other valiantly, skilfully on the Hill of Slaughter.

Active, angry, fierce were Donn Dorchan and Caoinleath ; they wounded and maimed each other, but neither could obtain the conquest.

The Fenii on one side of the hill waited for the end of the conflict of heroes : calm in their power were Meargach and his hosts, waiting for the head of Caoinleath.

Vehemently spake Conan and haughtily—but great was his distance from the battle—“ success to thy hand till thou hast killed Donn, O Caoinleath of the steel sword.”

Fiercely were they cutting body and limbs, the two who were not weak-spirited in visage, from the opening of the sun till evening ! then headless fell Donn Dorchan.

Aloud the Fenii raised a shout of triumph over the death of Donn Dorchan, the man of Meargach of the Blade, although the weapons had touched Caoinleath himself.

Fionn then said to Conan, "A little while ago thy speech was stiff; try now the strength of thy hand in single combat with a man of the host."

"I will not try the strength of my hand," said Conan, "nor will I measure deeds with any of them; were I to fall in the conflict, grief for me would not be long on thee O Fionn."

When Meargach of the Green Blade saw that Caoinleath had Donn prostrate, his body of strength and beauty he arrayed in warlike armour, for death and destruction.

He came without delay into the presence of Fionn, and addressed him in strong and haughty language: "prepare thyself for the conflict, or send here to me thy bravest hero."

Then spake Fionn in words of wrath, and asked him if they were not sufficient for him who had fallen? He replied, and truly did he speak, that the dead were not enough in revenge for Taille son of Trean.

Fionn called on a man of his own; fearlessly he came with an active leap; "A great indignity

is this"—said Meargach, "the showing of such a man as a defence."

"I will call my heavy forces," said Meargach in anger to Fionn, "we will let the heroes loose on each other;—thou man of the REMNANT speak not to me.—"

Not long was it before we observed the approach of high-minded Osgur of the weighty strokes, his burnished sword in his smooth right hand. O Patrick! great is his loss.

P. Relate to me O pleasant Oisin, how fared the battle with the two? Or was it by Meargach of the Green Blade that thy lovely son Osgur fell?

O. I tell thee once for all O Patrick, that to be near to thee is cause of melancholy; alone after Osgur and the Fenii; in the midst of the clergy, without much bread.

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O Believe nothing that thy God ever said, if he says that he obtained victory over the Fenii, without having in his reach host or troop—give not obedience to him for ever to the end of thy life.

Each relation that he gave to thee I grudge him not, but this only—that he, single-handed, conquered the hosts of the Fenii.

* * * *

P. It is certain with thee, that the Fenii were better than all who have yet come or who shall come hereafter; and certain is it with me, that better is God than thou and they together.

O. It is plain that never sawest thou the Fenii nor their gathering to battle in time of disturbance: not similar to the mournful psalm and shrill bell was their music.

Thy God, by himself, cannot equal that illustrious, majestic host: I never heard any description of his condition but that which thou and the clergy give in his honour.

P. I and the clergy have not related, from the first up to this time, the third of his good deeds—good never-ending is his good; believe me Oisin it is true.

O. O Patrick, I submit not to thy God; nor yet to thy words of foolish sound, that he himself was good, or his deeds, since he is a man without battle or host.

* * * *

P. O hoary bard, it is a horror to me, that with thee there is love neither for God nor for the clergy : but the time will come when thou wilt feel the loss thereof ; darkly bound in condemnation, in pain.

O. I am now a captive bound in pain ; for I am amidst the clergy, waiting for grace from the God who divides not bread with me.

Ye nor your God are to be compared with my king in distributing food : *he* was not displeased because of the number of the Fenii, and with him there was no grudging.

Not so with thee and thy clergy, nor with your noble chief whose name is great with ye : it is displeasing to you to have the companionship of a poor wretch without vigour, solitary, under grief.

P. Lovely, with us and with God, the sight of a hoary bard who would bend to our rule ; who would not be deep in superstition, as is usual with thee O simple Oisín.

O. Patrick, I would do thy pleasure and I would love thy God, if it were not that ye are for ever saying, that it was He who conquered the Fenii.

P. Blessings on the battalions of the Fenii, they were powerful, and their valour was great. Relate to me now delightfully, who gained the victory on the Hill of Slaughter?

O. Meargach of the Green Blade engaged with Osgur severely in single combat—Alas! Patrick, hadst thou beheld the pair thou wouldst not praise the deeds of the only Son of God.

We were all of the Fenii trembling vehemently and in sorrow, languid with anxiety lest our hero should fall by powerful Meargach of the firm hand.

The hosts of Meargach of the Green Blade were without heart, without pleasure, shedding tears; in fear of the slaying of their Chief by Osgur of the impetuous hand and sharp sword.

Patrick, if thou hadst witnessed each stroke and trace of the sword on the bodies of the rugged heroes, thou wouldst think thy God's strength not worth speaking about.

“O Meargach,” said Osgur aloud, “my hands have wounded thy body; I have cut thy flesh to the bone, and death is near to thee.”

“No fear have I of the approach of death coming from thy hand, generous Osgur : thy fall is certain by my hand, and that of the Fenii who are now alive.”

“I am surely certain, O severe Meargach, that not far from thee is peril of death : and that thou thyself and thy heavy host will fall by me and the Fenii of Erin.”

Osgur was seized with fierceness and rage ; his all-conquering spear he raised ; with madness of mind and strength of bone he hurled the fierce Meargach prostrate beneath him.

The hero was not long on the ground : quickly he rose ; shame then seized the man, and he recovered his former strength and deeds.

These two excellent warriors were from morning's dawn to the hour of eve, without rest, without cessation, without friendship, alas ! Patrick, in violent conflict.

Meargach inquired of Osgur if he would defer the fray till morning ? Osgur said, “Thou shalt have thy desire ;” and they separated.

They grasped each one the other's hand ; the

foreigner returned to his own host: swiftly, proudly, did Osgur proceed along the plain, passing before the ranks of the Fenii.

Some of us were joyful and pleasant, and others sorrowful of countenance, till the rising of the sun on the morrow, when our foes drew round about us.

Osgur put on defensive armour; in his hands he took weapons and shield: to the encounter came furious Meargach like a mighty lion.

Meargach and my son early in the morning began the attack, cutting and wounding bodies and bones; nor long was it ere the Fenii shouted.

P. On what account did the Fenii shout, Oisín of the wars? Relate unto me; make no mistake, I beseech thee, in thy report; sweet are thy sayings concerning them.

O. Not a boasting shout, O new Patrick, did the Fenii raise at that time, but a shout of weeping for a hard case; a shout of noise and also of astonishment.

O.—For what reason did the Fenii shout? the time seems long till thou dost reveal the cause: it

is plain, as thy song proceeds, that Osgur the lovely was in a hard case.

O. The cause why the Fenii shouted was this; with the third blow that Meargach of the Blade gave, he cast Osgur severely to the ground.

When Osgur was prostrate, both the Fenii and their foes thought that he was lifeless: but not long was it before the valiant hero arose, lively, upright standing.

“O Osgur,” said Fionn, “never till this day have I seen thy body prostrate on the earth’s sward, howsoever fierce was the nature of the champion.”

Said Meargach of the Blade, “I am certain that Osgur without delay shall be languidly, and the rest of the Fenii moreover, except thyself and little Hugh only.”

“The Fenii are now protected from thee, stern Meargach of the Green Blade,” said Osgur, “for now I have wounded thy body; no fear now to the Fenii because of thy bravery.”

“Osgur remember,” said Conan Maol, “that

thy fall would be loss to the Fenii ; remember each battle and heavy conflict that thou hast endured in behalf of Fionn's hosts."

Conan urged the valiant Osgur ; with bold courage he inspired the brave man : Patrick, I never yet have seen so mighty a battle between two heroes.

That was the most violent conflict, without untruth ; a conflict without pause, without partiality ; a conflict without bias, of the direst uproar.

" Osgur, remember that by thy hand fell the bad men of Dun na Gliath ; let not Meargach thrust thee backward, for thy loss would not be like booty taken from us," said Fionn of the Fenii.

" Dost thou not remember that powerful were the nations of Flanders and of the golden towers ? let not thy countenance be gone as a prey from us, but let us for ever hear thy voice.

" Dost thou not remember that, after the slaughter of our men, by thee alone fell Taile son of Trean, and each other champion of the weighty host, who came in force against the Fen ii?"*

* Fionn, who was a poet, but not a professional *bard*,

We all knew that death was not far from the two, but it was not long till we had cause of joy, when fell without vigour the mighty man.

Although the hero fell unto the earth—in the agonies of death as we imagined—with activity he rose bravely, and said, “There was mistake among the Fenii.”

The evening was near to us both ; the Fenii and the strangers understood that it was right for the two valiant heroes to desist from the fight, till return of day.

Fionn spoke to the mighty men, and said it would be graceful for both of them, with each

reminds Osgur of his exploits in former wars, to incite him to deeds of bravery in his battle with Meargach. The Celtic bard did not—like the *scald* of Scandinavian tribes—compose his war ode previous to the battle. His person was sacred, and (clad in flowing white robes, harp in hand, and hair streaming in the breeze) he would follow his favourite warrior through the thickest of the fight : singing, in strains of wild beauty, the praise of his chieftain’s deeds at the very time of their performance. The “war ode to Osgur in front of the battle of Gabhra” is a very fine specimen of the Celtic war ode : it is attributed to Feargus, brother of Oisín. and is given in *Brooke’s Reliques*.

other's consent, to cease from conflict until the rising of the sun.

Meargach of the Green Blade replied, " It is fit for us O Fionn ; never have I encountered such a champion of vigorous strength."

Said Osgur, " Stern Meargach, from this time forward I proclaim to thee and to Fionn, neither by day nor by night shall we desist, till one of us falls in death."

That night those two good champions separated ; sore and inflamed were their bodies ; their flesh and their bones without power, without essence, without use.

On the morrow, at dawn of day, the pair furiously rushed upon each other : never before was such display of hardness of strength and deeds of hands.

These were the two, O Patrick, who were most courageous and vehement in powerful conflict : their arms were strongest to send sword to the bone.

I have not seen two like them in strength, in

training, and most powerful vigour; in courage, in fierceness, in resoluteness, and in sport of mischievous gladness.

I have not seen the equals of those two heroes, in suffering grievous hard strokes, cutting the flesh of their gentle skins; abiding without banquet, without slumber.

In forcefulness, in bravery, and in vigour, without falling away in their desire for conflict: the two were without cessation from the action, by day or by night, for the space of ten days.

“O stern Meargach of the Green Blade,” said Osgur bravely aloud, “wondrous is the shame to us both, to be thus standing when the battle is in our hands only.”

Answered Meargach, “O Osgur, thou art the hardest of hand of all those who have ever striven with me; thy end and that of the Fenii is to fall by my hand.”

“It is not my fate nor that of the Fenii O stern Meargach, to fall as thou sayest by thy hand,” replied Osgur the bold and resolute.

Osgur took to himself fierceness, anger, and courage, although terrified was his visage: nor was it long after Osgur had spoken that Meargach said, "Slumber would be very good."

"Thou shalt be in want of food and slumber, O stern Meargach," replied valiant Osgur, "until thou art deficient of thy head, or myself, since I was prostrate."

Not long were we all side by side, waiting for the end and listening to them, before Meargach, by the firm blows of Osgur, was forced to seek the defence of his shield.

Osgur stayed not nor drew back; each blow of his sword fell firm: in the end of the battle he cut off the head of Meargach stern.

We the Fenii raised the shout of victory, and the others the bitter shout of lamentation. The son of Meargach of the Green Blade said, "Let a man come forth to meet me."

Then went against him Longadan son of Bruighean *of the apparition*: the surname of Meargach of the Green Blade's son was Ciardan, and a warlike man was he.

Before I relate the new engagement, it were pity not to take notice of our champion, covered over with great and wondrous wounds received from Meargach of the bold actions.

Our valiant champion we did bear from view of the mighty hosts: but first he asked permission from Fionn to go and fight the son likewise.

Fionn would not let the valiant man go into combat with sprightly Ciardan: he put healing matter into his wounded bones; lamentable to us before long was the absence of the man.

After we had left our champion feebly stretched on his bed of slumber, with attendants to keep him company, we returned to the place where the battle was raging.

Longadan made a powerful attack on Ciardan strong in battle! not long were they contending when the son of Bruighean was given to decay.

O Patrick, of our Fenii there fell, by Ciardan alone, the first day one hundred and ten warlike men; sorrowful were we because of the absence of our hero.

As many more fell by him the second day, nor was his fair skin wounded by them : two hundred men of courageous vigour : O Patrick, sorrowful was our condition !

When Gaul son of Morni saw that Ciardan was fettering the host, he went himself to meet him : nor was it long before he prostrated him.

On the slaying of Ciardan by Gaul the strangers shouted and bitterly lamented : the Fenii shouted for joy, though pleasure was yet distant from them.

Then came the brother of Ciardan, his surname was Liagan : he was a hero, active, valiant, and powerful, and he challenged the noblest of the Fenii.

Vigorous as Liagan came Ceirn son of Luig of nimblest hand : they fought not long together O new Patrick, before the Fenian man was prostrate on the sward.

The second man of the Fenii then came forth, Maonus son of Leabhran ; himself and one hundred after him of our strong men fell by the hand of Liagan.

Conan (who was not vehement in battle, and whose deeds had not the valour of a hero) went to meet Liagan: when he came down Liagan said, "Thy journey is inconsiderate thou bald man."

On coming of Conan near to him, the valiant Liagan lifted his hand: "more mighty against thee is the man behind than I who am before thee," said Conan.

Valiant Liagan looked behind; but scarcely had he turned his head when Conan, by a sudden sweep of his sword, separated his head from the neck.

Conan stood not long on the ground—and no man there would have wished to do so: he ran at full speed towards the Fenii; feebly he cast his sword from his hand.

Faolan inquired of the bald man the reason why he would not stand his ground; and said that the deed he had done was shameful; that by treachery was the fall of Liagan.

"Were it possible for me by one stroke to lay low the powerful host, although it should be by

treachery, I should not account it shame ; so that they were not permitted to stay amid the Fenii."

Said Faolan aloud, " Go, and once more take thy blade in hand ; valiantly proclaim a strenuous battle with the man of noblest deeds in the hosts of the stranger."

" I take not thy counsel," replied Conan, " and whosoever thinks my deed shameful, let *himself* proclaim battle and conflict with a man of the host ; or if it pleases him with two."

" Come in my company," said Faolan, " and march with me instantly down : if I fall by the person who shall come against me, call thou on another man of the Fenii for aid."

" I will not go there, alone by myself, nor yet in thy company," said Conan Maol ; " if thou should'st fall there, Faolan, 'twould be no time for me to be calling."

" Come as *one* with me, thou bald man, and bring with thee thy sword ; but don't stay with me, if thou art afraid of losing thy head by the foe."

The bald man and Faolan approached, together step for step they came to the place where Liagan was fallen;—"Faolan," said Conan, "be on thy silence."

The bald man taking his sword ran rapidly back to the Fenii; Faolan proclaimed battle, aloud, with the best of the host of the stranger, in equal combat.

Quickly came to oppose him a bulky champion of boisterous speech: they called him generous Daol Ciabh: in his right hand were sword and shield.

Not long were the two engaged with their swords till we beheld—and to the others it was delightful—swift Faolan, our courageous hero defending himself by his shield from the blows of generous Daol Ciabh.

The others raised a shout of joy—though sad their faces because of the death of Liagan: we raised aloud the shout of lamentation for the failing of our Faolan's strength.

Osgur heard the howling sound on his bed where he was lying feeble—he exclaimed, "The

battle is general and none of the Fenii will be under a head !”

Nor long was it ere we beheld approaching us the brave hero of powerful vigour : we knew not that it was he who was there, until he gently saluted Fionn.

“ I imagined O Fionn,” said valiant Osgur, “ when I heard the shout of sadness, that there was not a champion standing unwounded on the hill, and that none of ye would be alive when I came.”

The generous Daol Caibh and Faolan were intrepidly fighting in conflict dire, cutting the flesh of their handsome necks—full pitiable was the appearance of both.

Fionn desired the true and powerful hero, the high-minded Osgur, to turn back again to the fortress, nor tarry amid the noise of the hosts.

“ I shall not go backward, noble Fionn,” replied Osgur who trembled not in conflict, “ until I know which of the two shall fall in action by the other.”

Faolan was in torture, pressed hard by brave Daol Caibh : “ O Faolan,” said Osgur of the

sharp sword, "thy fall by Daol would be unpleasant."

In his hard extremity Faolan looked upon Osgur; indignation was in his countenance: "O flower of the warlike heroes, if I fall forsake not my cause."

Said Osgur, "If thou dost fall by Daol Ciabh O Faolan, though mighty his heavy host, I will fall by him or by some one of the others! or he shall fall after thee.

"Remember Faolan the many heroes who have fallen by thy hand: nor is it worthy of thee, in presence of the Fenii, not to oppose Daol Ciabh hand to hand."

Not long remained we in anxiety; soon we beheld, O lovely sight! the head roll from Daol Ciabh, cut off by Faolan; for his death we raised the shout of pleasure.

Osgur said with loud voice, "Let the men come now from the other side, and they shall speedily obtain from men of the hosts of Fionn a battle wild and general?"

“I will not desist,” says Faolan of the steel sword, “till others of the host shall fall there, in single-combat, by my own hand; unless by them I am put to decay.”

P. Oisin tell to me—and tell me not an untruth—if ye of the Fenii were men of the greatest vigour, why was there not, at the first, with Meargach and his people an engagement rough and general?

O. Patrick, it was not customary with the Fenii to refuse others the choice of battle: no natural affection had they for hypocrisy or deceit towards a man of any people who might be against them.

The Fenii in their time refused not (in battle, in conflict, or in wild uproar) a general engagement, or single combat; believe me, Patrick, I speak not falsely.

P. Proceed truthfully with thy narration till we come to the end of the Hill of Slaughter. Did that fierce man Faolan fall, of whom you continually make mention?

O. Having obtained the consent of the Fenii

he proclaimed stern battle against the others : to oppose him came a champion, whose surname was Cian son of Lachda.

Mighty, valiant, dire was the attack of these two brave heroes : not long time till we were joyful ; the others sorrowful, filled with gloom.

Ere Faolan could give the second blow to Cian son of Lachda of the firm hand, we perceived a stately Queen approaching the Hill of Slaughter.

ARRIVAL OF AILE GEAL SNUADH, WIFE OF
MEARGACH. *

Before she came near unto us Cian son of Lachda fell by Faolan's hand : hushed was the noise of battle on each side, waiting for the arrival of that fair woman.

Our foes raised a shout of delight when they knew she was their Queen : the Fenii were without pleasure, in silence beholding her, for she was shedding tears.

* The arrival of Aile, her reception by Fionn, and her lamentation over the corpses of her husband and two sons, are most vividly set before us : it would not be easy to point to any piece of description more perfectly beautiful.

On her head was golden hair; O Patrick, my boast is not a falsehood, thou thyself nor thy God have ever seen such a glory of locks on any woman.

She inquired in the most sedate voice, where was illustrious Fionn, king of the Fenii? whether her husband and her two sons had fallen? and her brother likewise, where had he gone to?

“Who is thy gentle husband?” said Fionn, “explain to me, and thy two sons? if they have fallen in the slaughter thou shalt receive intelligence O gentle lady.”

“The surname of my husband of mighty conquest is Meargach stern, of the Green Blade; and his two sons, Ciardan, so powerful, and Liagan, brave in battle.”

“O generous Queen,” said Fionn, “in disorder have all three fallen, although active, polished, strong-handed were they in battle’s uproar, and vigorous.”

The Queen screamed and shouted, and her hands she did clap bitterly; she shed a shower of briny tears, and said, “Oh! where is my husband decaying?”

Through the slaughter the most stately Queen advanced ; she came exactly to the place where her husband and her two sons lay prostrate.

From east and west the Fenii collected ; timorously also the others, from each side and point of the hill ; they hearkened to the delightful voice of the woman.

O Patrick, thy great God has not seen, thy clergy, nor thyself, a woman so lovely in her form, in her movements, and quality.

When she came over the corses she tore her golden-coloured hair, she threw herself over the three, without motion, distracted, unheeding.

Her beautiful tender countenance changed ; her eyes so brilliant, and her beaming brow, her cheeks, her mouth, and her limbs had the appearance of death ; piteous to behold !

Not long did we remain gazing ere she went into a deathlike swoon ; aloud raised the others the howl of lamentation, the Fenii themselves were under grief.

We ourselves supposed, and also the others,

that she was dead, the Queen of power; to her own form she returned before long, and thus she bewailed and lamented:—

LAMENTATION OF AILE GEAL SNUADH.

O stern Meargach, of the green sharp sword, many were they, in war and mighty battle, in the rushing together of hosts, and in single encounter, who fell by the victory of thy hands!

On thy body I see no stripe, no gory wound; Oh! my love, I am certain that by treachery, not by strength of hands, thou wast conquered!

Far distant was thy journey from the land of thy kindred to Erin; to attack Fionn and the Fenii; by deceit they hastened thy death!

Desolate is thy spouse; thy head thou hast lost by treachery of the Fenii! my two youths, my two sons, my two heroes who were fierce in battle!!

My grief! my tower razed! my grief! my shade and my shield! my grief! my meat and my drink! my grief for my three, from this night for ever!

My grief! my watch and my defence! my grief! my strength and my might! my grief! my protection from evil! my grief, this night ye lie feebly.

My grief! my gladness and my friendship! my grief! my reliance in every place! my grief! my vigour and my strength! my grief! from this night forward ye are languid!

My grief! my guidance and my purpose! my grief! my desire till the day of my death! my grief! my fame and my power! my sorrow! my champions who were noble!

My sorrow! my couch and my slumber! my sorrow! my foray and my home! my sorrow! my raiment and my flower! my wretched sorrow! my three men!

My sorrow! my adornment and my beauty! my sorrow! my jewels and my treasures! my sorrow! my instruction and my wonder! my sorrow! my three champions of light!

My sorrow! my friends and my kindred! my sorrow! my tribe and my authority! my sorrow!

my father and my mother ! my sorrow ! my wan-
hope ! ye are slain !

My sorrow ! my union and my welcome ! my
sorrow ! my health at all times ! my sorrow ! my
sweetness and my solace ! my doleful mourning !
ye are weakly !

My woe ! my spear and my sword ! my woe !
my mildness and my love ! my woe ! my country
and my dwelling ! my woe ! ye return not to
meet me !

My woe ! my bay and my harbour ! my woe !
my wealth and my happiness ! my woe ! my
majesty and my kingdom ! my woe ! ye are
weakly each day for ever !

My woe ! my all in prosperity ! my woe ! my
reliance in action ! my woe ! my assembling of
hosts ! my woe ! my three great lions !

My woe ! my gaming and my drinking ! my
woe ! my music and my delight ! my woe ! my
summer-house and my attendants ! my woe ! and
my cause of strife for ever !

Alas ! my hunting and my venison ! alas ! my

three peculiar champions! Alas! oh, alas! my sorrow for them! far from home they lie slain by the Fenii!

I knew by the powerful hosts at war in front of the fort, by that sign in the glens of the air, that danger was near to my three.

I knew by the sound of the fairy-voice—distinctly blown into the holes of my ears—that not far distant from me was lamentation; tidings of your fall; my bitter salt sorrow!

I knew on the dawn of the day when my three brave heroes departed from me, on seeing drops of blood on their cheeks, that to the fort they would not return alive.

I knew by the voice of the Bean-sighe,* so

* *Bean-sighe* (female-sidhe), or banshee. The word *sidhe* means a sort of genius or fairy, who was supposed to dwell on pleasant hills. Vallancey explains banshee as “a young demon, supposed to attend each family, and to give notice of the death of a relation to persons at a distance.” It is probable that the belief in *sidhe* was of eastern (perhaps Arabian or Persian) origin, introduced by the Phœnicians, together with the worship of *Kerman Kelstach*, the favourite idol of the Ultonians. These were deities of a mythology which in Ireland in a great measure superseded the worship

melodiously wailing in the city each evening, that when thou didst leave thy spouse so gentle, sadness was near to myself.

Don't you remémber, you three so noble, how often I said unto you that, if you went to Erin I should not behold your faces victorious ?

I knew, by the heavy lowing of the deer each morning since ye went from me, that to fall in death was before you ; my sorrow ! was it not too true ?

I knew, O generous three, by your forgetting your faithful hounds, that to the kingdom ye would not return with victory ; that ye would meet with treachery from the hosts of the Fenii.

I knew, ye buds of heroes, by the stream of the cascade near the fort being turned to blood at the time of your departure, the deceit that was ever in Fionn.

I foresaw, by the visit of the eagle each evening

of *Crom-Cruach*, to which frightful deity the Irish offered their children on a plain called *Magh-Sleachth*, or Field of Slaughter, in that part of the country now called Leitrim.

wheeling round the fort, that ere long I should hear some new tale concerning my three.

I foresaw, by the trunk of the tree decaying close to branch and leaf in front of the court that ye would not return with victory from the treachery of Fionn, son of Cumhal.

“Be not reproaching Fionn so much, generous queen, nor yet reproach the host of the Fenii,” said Graine,* “not by deceit nor fraud have thy three fallen there.”

The Queen made no reply at all to Graine; she took no notice of her speech, but gave forth her song of lamentation; showering and constantly shedding tears.

I knew, on my looking after ye the day ye went from me from the court, by the flying of the black raven out before me, that it was no good omen of returning.

* Graine and Ailbhe, two of the ten daughters of Cormac, king of Erin, were Fionn's wives. Graine, being (as is quaintly related by Keating) “of an amorous disposition, left him, and stole away with her gallant, Diarmuid O' Duibhne.” This is still commemorated by the name of a place in the old O'Shaghnessie's country, *Leaba Dhirmuda and Graine*, i. e. Diarmuid and Graine's bed.

I knew, by the hound of Ciardan whining continually each evening, that soon I should receive my pain; the report of my three under sadness.

I knew, by the small portion of my slumber night after night, and by the stream of tears flowing from my eyes since your departure, that for you it was no omen of protection.

I knew, by the awful dream which showed me my own figure, my hands and my head cut off, that it was ye who were without sway.

I knew, by the plaintive bay of the dog beloved by Liagan, early each morning babbling, that my three were in great distress.

I knew, when was shown unto me the lake of blood in a part of the fort, that my three were fallen by that treachery which was ever in Fionn, son of Cumhal.

“Be not reproaching Fionn,” said Graine, “though vexed be thy heart O woman; henceforward cease from reviling the majestic Fenii, or their chief.”

“O Graine,” said the Queen of the golden hair, “if these three who lie there lowly were thine, dispraising and upraiding would not satisfy thee, most surely, in revenge for their death.”

“Had they remained in their own kingdom O gentle Queen,” said Graine the wife of Fionn, “and not come to avenge Mac Trean’s death, from the Fenii they would have had nought to fear.”

“If they had fallen by fair sway of swords, without deceit or treachery, O gentle Queen, I would not lay blame upon the Fenii; they live not to speak for themselves.”

“Were they alive O generous Queen, themselves would not revile the Fenii; for the loss of their heads is witness that not by treachery were they slain.”

“I say, Graine, it were possible to prostrate them by fraud and treachery, and, when in fetters by guile, to behead them by violence of swords.”

Believe me O Queen,” said Graine, “there was not treachery nor deceit in the hand which o’er-came Meargach of the Green Blade, and by strength cast his head from him.

“Moreover I tell to thee without falsehood, it is wrong for thee to give disgrace to the two who laid thy children in feebleness ; guileless are they O noble Queen.”

“O Graine,” said the generous Queen who was called Aile Geal Snuadh, “I believe you not nor do I believe the Fenii, if it is said that these have fallen by other than treacherous action.”

“Talk no longer with us, and do not bring danger upon yourself Aile Geal ; there never was treachery in the Fenii, and they deprive none of their just rights.”

“If in the conflict they had shown justice towards my three, O very generous Graine, thy powerful host—victorious in so many battles—would now be fading away.”

“Aile Geal Snuadh,” said Fionn’s Graine, “since thou believest not what I tell thee, the Fenii *shall* prostrate *with guile* more of thy weighty host upon the plain.”

“O Graine,” said the valiant Queen, “because I know the hardy men who will fight in future, I am certain that I shall yet bring slaughter upon the Fenii.”

“Aile,” said the delightful Graine, “we know well that long has been thy journey hither ; come with me into the ranks of the Fenii, and together let us partake of drink and food.”

Aile Geal Snuadh refused the invitation of Fionn’s Graine, and said it was not proper for her to receive banquet nor festivity from the doers of such deeds.

“May my body be cut through the middle,” roared Conan of boisterous speech, “if thou Aile Geal Snuadh, shalt not pay for this great and unjust scandal put upon the Fenii.”

“Thou bald man, of the ugliest appearance that I have ever yet seen in any place, I am certain that some time thou hast paid dearly for scolding, and that it would be grievous for thee to relate the tale.”

Said Conan, “Thou shalt pay more dearly for the shame and scandal to the Fenii ; I will take thy head from off thee without any concern, if I get liberty from Fionn.”

“Though thy body is large and fierce, and wide the shape of thy bald head ; though stout and

brawny thy frame, and wanton ; still, I promise that thou art no good hero."

We, the Fenii, all did raise and the other side also, a tremendous shout, when the woman did reproach and ridicule the bald man.

The bald man was very angry, and he spoke fiercely :—"Cause of weeping and showers of tears I invoke upon the Fenii, and upon the others."

He drew his sword forth from its sheath, and made a violent rush towards the woman ; Osgur smote him a hard blow which caused an audible sound on his breast.

Conan howled and looked pitifully upon Osgur of the sharp steel sword, and said, "Osgur it is a shameful deed, thou has made my ribs to ache from side to side."

"I would not have wounded thy ribs nor thy body, but that I saw thy desire was evil : it is not seemly for thee to unsheath thy sword, when thou seest the countenance and beauty of the woman."

"I have no regard for the woman's beauty, for

her lovely countenance, nor for her smile: I thought more of the senseless shame, and of the scolding of Fionn and the Fenii."

Fionn and the Fenii withdrew from the hill, and with them Osgur, the man of generous character: the modest Queen and the others retired to their own side likewise.

CONTINUATION OF THE BATTLE.

On the morrow the Fenii came to the place where the slaughter was; soon we observed approaching us Aile Geal Snuadh with the strangers.

Graine went to meet her, and caught the afflicted Queen by the hand: hand in hand they walked swiftly to the front ranks of the hosts.

Whilst they were approaching Daire played the war notes melodiously: Fionn sounded the Barra Buadh, calling together his heavy host with speed.

"Aile Geal Snuadh," said Graine, "do you think it best for two of the heroes to join in

combat with sharp swords, or do you prefer a general battle of slaughter?"

"Graine," said Aile Geal, "It is suitable for thirty of the Fenian heroes to fight in equal conflict with thirty of my champions."

"Call to thee thy thirty champions, on the plain by themselves: and I will call thirty of the Fenii, men powerful in battle and slaughter."

"O Truadhain," said the generous Queen, "four hundred men were wont to fall by thy hand in one day; come thou and go forth as chief of the conflict."

"O Giabhain," said Graine aloud, "In one battle three hundred and sixteen men fell by thy hand, stand thou beside him."

"O Meinuir," said Aile Geal Snuadh, "thou bringest the deer from the hills by the swift enduring running of thy two feet; no coward art thou, and it is proper to call thee."

"Ruathaire," said Fionn's Graine, "under thy foot is not broken the tuft; nimble is thy pursuit with pure agility, thou wilt be swift as he in the engagement."

“O Conairain, never didst thou leave a bone or a tooth of hero unbroken ; good art thou in battle or strife, and I determine to call thee.”

“O Cosgaire,” said Graine bravely, “by a single blow thou causest the head to sink in dust a mile from the body ; I accept thee as his equal in strife.”

“O Eireara, the inflictor of severe wounds upon the bodies of powerful heroes, I suppose it is right for thee to go ; remember the three who have fallen.”

These two lovely women chose out the men, until the number, thirty on each side, was completed.

The mighty men attacked one another, each two warlike champions in equal strife : at the end of the battle there did not live of all that number but two men of the Fenii.

When the Fenii perceived the vehement prostration of the others, they raised three shouts of delight, which might be heard on the plain and in the heights of air.

“Aile Geal Snuadh,” said Graine, “stubborn

on each side was the conflict of the valiant warriors of good repute:—let those who remain go with thee and with thy worldly substance.”

“ I go not, nor will they O Graine, to our own country ; they will fight until the last man of them is fallen, unless I obtain my revenge from the Fenii.”

“ I tell thee, Aile, better is it for you never to halt till you reach your own pleasant land, or else a man will not live to return there with tidings.”

“ To our land we will not go, Graine ; we stay till the whole of our host shall have fallen, or till we obtain, in revenge for those who have fallen, the head of Fionn of the steel hand.”

When the host of the Fenii heard the boastful language of the woman, Fionn sounded the Barra Buadh—the sign for us to arm and raise clamorous shout.

We assembled from all points of the hill, as many of us as were left standing : Fionn said in a loud voice to us—“ Rush forth into severe and equal conflict.”

“ Aile Geal Snuadh, lamentable is this speaking of Fionn of the steel hand:—in the most wrathful language I tell thee, not one person will be left unto thee alive.”

Fionn then sounded aloud the *Dord*, the cry of battle's remembrance; the mighty men attacked one another, with fury was the conflict maintained.

Alas ! Patrick, that battle was the most mighty and most valiant of combats that has ever happened from the beginning of the world : to the Queen of severe voice it was cause of sorrow.

Osgur marched at the head of the Fenii, in his right hand his polished sword : we and our foes arrived at the plain of slaughter and dire uproar.

I sing but the truth, O Patrick ! although the other men were firm and magnificent, they all fell by the Fenii, except three only and that lovely woman.

In that battle most sad, there fell of the host of the Fenii itself eleven hundred valiant men, heroes who were strong in war.

The Queen and those three departed ; we knew

not where they went: at their departure they were sorrowful, O Patrick of the clergy, and sad.

END OF THE BATTLE.

P. Oisin, relate to me without a falsehood, the noble heroes of the Fenii—not counting the valiant thirty—who fell on the Hill of Slaughter.

O. I will tell thee of each bulky chief and warlike hero who fell on the hill, slain by the stranger, and by that bold man Taile son of Trean.

On this western hill fell Conneciabhrach rough of voice; better of hand was he, and stronger in fight than the Son of God, though with thee he is great.

It was there fell, and sorrowful for me is the song, Draladh Flannnda who was enduring in battle: he could play with vigour in action against God's Son.

There fell, disastrous to relate, the wise Luanan of the heavy sword, who could fetch the boar from the mountain by the gladsome nimble running of his strong limbs.

It was there did fall the brave Cruagan, who in one meal would eat a whole ox and two score cakes of bread:—were he alive he would not like Rome's clergy.

There fell the active Caol Luaimneach, who in speed could outstrip the wind: Ciarnan dreadful in plunder: it would not be pleasant to thy clergy were *he* alive.

The great Dorachan fell there, better in battle than thy God, for he would cut bodies and bones, and distribute the food generously.

Caolduanach the swift fell there, Bolgaire, Searc, and Criagan—four courageous champions, my sorrow each hour! and my grief!

There fell Lianan of the smooth limbs, who was most active and mighty in fight, and who was wont to attend upon the Fenii; very generous was he in his house and liberal.

There fell the handsome Meangan who made terrible each stroke in weighty conflict, Meanduir and Cianndan valiant; three who were of great worth.

The slender-footed Ceirn fell there, Cruadhan and Hugh of the large coronet: three most dexterous in strength, and of good speed in deeds of the sword.

Largara so tall fell there, Ciardan Donn so humane in mind, Gorgan who would destroy bones, Mianan and Glaire who were mighty.

There fell Folban victorious, Bosan, Luaine, Daoise, and Laig: Cieran, Leantar, and Gaine mild, Druaload, Blaod, and Ciantair.

The lively Cuarnan fell there, Rinne, Gloirne, Ciar and Braid: Bellaire, Cuirnin and merry Mandan, Laisne, Frach, Niall, and Glas.

There fell also Mullan of the Spirits, severe in dangerous battle: and many others, O new Patrick, of whom I do not make mention, fell in the same place.

* * * *

Those who survived the battle collected themselves together: we all spoke of going a-hunting on the shores of Loch-Leun.*

* *Loch Leun* was the ancient Irish name for the Lake of Killarney.

What number we had of goodly hounds and of sweetly-sounding dogs, thou wilt obtain from me O Patrick! though mournful is it for a Bard to live after them, speaking of these things under sorrow.

With us we had Sgeolan and Bran, &c. &c.

[The Irish MS contains a list of names of dogs belonging to Fionn, Osgur, Faolan, Gaul, MacLuig, MacRonan, Diarmuid O'Duibhne, Glas-Caoibh, Fergus the poet of Fionn, and himself: the names fill thirty stanzas: and Oisin assures us that in addition to those hounds there went ten hundred dogs of swiftness to the chase. The old bard and the saint afterwards abuse each other till at last the bard bursts out.]—

If the swift son of Morni were alive, valiant Gaul who never concealed himself, or Duibhne's son the delight of women, the champion who could fight a hundred:

If Fergus lived, the poet of Fionn,* who fairly

* Fergus was Fionn's chief bard or *Ollamh-re-dan*. "This honourable station was filled by Fergus *Fibheoil* (of the sweet lips), a bard on whom succeeding poets have bestowed almost as many epithets as Homer has given to his Jupiter. In several poems, still extant, he is called *Fir-glie* (truly ingenious): *Fathach* (superior in knowledge): *Focal-geur*

divided praise amongst the Fenii, or Daire who played without fault; in the sound of thy bells I should not delight.

Or were Magra of the sword alive, the champion who was not behind when slaughter took place, Osgur, or pleasant MacRonan; thy prating in the church would not be pleasant to us.

Or the little dwarf* who followed Fionn, who would put each bulky hero in a heavy slumber; more melodious would the sounds from his finger be than voice of clergy in cells and in country.

If Hugh the little, son of Fionn, lived, or amusing Conan who satirised each one—Conan who

(skilled in choice of words) &c. &c. So persuasive was his eloquence that, united with his rank, it acquired him an almost universal ascendancy."—*Walker's Memoirs of the Irish Bards*.

* This dwarf is supposed to have been a Laplander; the peaceful dispositions of the men of Lapland encouraged the cultivation of arts, such as making weapons and armour, and the practice of instrumental music, &c. Belonging to Scandinavian mythology was a satyr called Meming, skilled in making weapons: he would work only when forced by club law. Sir W. Scott says (in his letters on *Demonology*), that possibly Meming and Luno are names for the same person. See note on page 137.

was scarce of hair,—ah! they have left me for a season, out under melancholy.

Alas! the Fenii live not now! nor Fionn who burst through dangers—the doleful psalms have bothered, and the shrill rough bells, my ears!!!

Were it not for the enchantment that encircled Fionn, by which he was destined to fall, those who are above and those who are below could not have defeated my king for ever.

P. My King created the heavens, He it is who gives to heroes their strength; He formed the vast expanse, it is He who gives blossoms to the branches.

It is He who made the sun and the moon: He it is who makes the fishes to swim in the ocean; He fashioned the alder and ivy tree, His deeds are not to be compared with the exploits of Fionn.

O. Not in making hay and corn did my king exert himself, but in discomfiture of heroes, protecting booty, and in spreading his fame.

In courting, in games, in hunting, in displaying his anger at the commencement of conflict, in

playing at chess, in swimming, and in company in the house of drink.

Patrick, where was thy God when the two came from distant lands, bringing in their ship the Queen of Lochlin, for which act many men fell faint and exhausted?*

When Maonus Mor arrived, of barbarous speech; if thy God existed then he would know something of the Fenii of Fionn.

Or when Tailc, son of Trean, came, the man who destroyed so many of the Fenii. Not by

* Mac-Connacher and Ainle were forgotten by Fionn at a feast, and they resented by deserting from his standard, and joining themselves to the army of his enemy, Airgean, king of Lochlin. The young queen of Lochlin fell in love with Ainle, whose form was beautifully graceful, and fled with him and his friend to Ireland; the king in a fury pursued them, determining to slay all the Fenii. Fionn tried all measures to bring about a satisfactory arrangement, but without success. A battle ensued; the slaughter on each side was dreadful, but in the end the Irish were victorious. Ainle himself was killed in the battle. *Vide Brooke's Reliques*, &c. p. 86. Macpherson constructed the argument of his poem, "Battle of Lora," out of this Irish tradition, changing the Irish hero, Mac-Connacher, into a Scotch chief, named by him Ma-ronnan; Ainle he altered to Aldo, and Airgean he called Erragon.

God fell the champion, but by the strength of Osgur fighting for his comrades.

Allean, son of fierce Anninir, who won treasures from flaming Tamor; not by God did the hero fall in single combat, but by the arm of Fionn, matchless in fight.

Multitudes of battles, breaking through hosts, assembling of the Fenii of Erin. I never heard of the king of saints that he made exploits, or even that his hands were cut.

P. Let us cease from contention on each side, thou ancient bard, who art inconsiderate; understand that God reigns above in heaven, Fionn and his hosts are below.

O. It were a shame for God not to take from Fionn the bonds of pain; if thy God were in captivity, in his behalf would my hero fight.

Never in all his life did Fionn allow any one to be in pain or in danger, without redeeming him with silver and gold; or by battle and conflict till he released him.

P. O sagacious bard thou art not considerate,

give over and talk not senselessly ; for what is past God will forgive thee, if henceforth thou wilt do His will.

O. I will not yield satisfaction to thyself nor to thy God, O clerk of the clergy ; and I do not thank ye for forgiveness of sins that I have committed against Him.

P. Smite thy breast and shed tears, and believe in Him who is above thee ; although with thee it seems wonderful, He it was who conquered Fionn.

O. My pitiful state !! the sound of thy voice is not melodious unto me : quickly I will lament, not for the sake of God, but because Fionn and the Fenii are not alive.

P. Forsake strife and anger's error, and, as thou didst promise, tell me how the chase was made by them.

THE CHASE.

Fionn of the chiefs walked the verdant plain of Almhain ; a young fawn ran towards him with headlong speed.

He screamed to Sgeolan and Bran, he whistled for the two ; he told no one of his purpose ; hastily he followed the bald fawn.

There were with Fionn his two hounds and Mac-an-Lunn ;* with speed he chased the fawn to the smooth base of Sliamb Guilling.†

When Fionn reached the mountain, following his two hounds, he knew not, east or west, which

* *Mac-an-Lun* means *son of Luno*. This sword was the work of Luno, the dwarf. "Give me out of the tomb the hardened sword *which the dwarfs made* for Suafurlama."—*Five Pieces of Run. Poetry*.

† Miss Brooke gives this account of the mountain Sliamb Guilling :—"From top to bottom it is reckoned two miles. On the summit there is a large heap of stones which is called Cailleach Birrn's House, in which it is said that Finn MacCumhal lies buried ; and at a hundred paces distance, on the same level, there is a circular lake, the diameter of which is about 100 feet, and it is about twenty deep. On one side of this lake another heap of stones is piled, and round it at all seasons is a beaten path, leading to the Witch's House. Lately some peasants, expecting to find out this old woman, threw down her house, and came to a large cave about twenty feet long, ten broad, and five deep, covered with large flags, in which either the dame or money was expected, but only a few human bones were found." The mountain is in Armagh, and the view from the summit is extensive and beautiful.

way the doe left the hill: Fionn went east, his two hounds west with speed.

In the distance Fionn heard the weeping of a woman; she sat on the banks of a lake: there the young damsel wept; her figure and her face were lovely.

Her cheeks were redder than the rose, her mouth was like two berries; as the blossom was her chalky neck; her bosom was fair as the lime.

The colour of gold was on her hair: her eyes were as stars on frosty night: hadst thou beheld her form, thy affection thou wouldst have given to the woman.

Fionn went up to the modest maid of the golden tresses; he inquired of the pure countenance, "didst thou observe my hounds in chase?"

"In the chase I have no delight; thy two hounds I have not seen: O king of the Fenii I am sad: great is my cause for weeping."

"Has thy husband died? thy blooming daughter or thy son? for whom dost thou lament, gentle maid of loveliest form?"

The fair maid of smooth hands replied, " Into the lake a ring of gold fell from the palm of my hand ; there, where the three streams rush down.

" O chief of the Fenii, I call upon thee by the oath which binds all true heroes, to bring me back the delightful ring which fell in the stream of the violent torrents."

The power of her magic she put upon him : he stripped his fair smooth skin : to the brink of the lake he went : he swam in obedience to the maid of sparkling eyes.

Five times did he swim round the lake : each hollow and nook he searched : he found the delightful ring which the maid of the blooming cheeks had lost.

The hero held out the enchanted ring : before he reached the bank the king of the Fenii became an old man, withered and grey.

We the Fenii were in pleasant Almhain of the stately princes, playing on chess-boards,* and

* The Chinese claim to have known the game of chess 200 years B.C. In the sixth century it was brought from India to Persia, whence it was spread by the Arabians and

drinking; our heroes listened to the music of harps.

Caoilte son of Ronan spoke aloud, he was heard by each man—"Where went Cumhal's generous son? Where went his hounds stately in chase?"

Conan son of Morni said, "Never was tale more delightful to me—the son of Cumhal to be missing,—O Caoilte, may he be so for a year.

"If the son of Cumhal is a-wanting, O firm Caoilte of the slender feet,* I take upon myself to be chief over all the Fenii."

We went forth from Almhain—a host valiant

Crusaders all over the world. Through Phœnician merchants the Irish seem to have been early brought into indirect communication with India, and through them they may have learnt the game. "Dr. Hyde says, the old Irish were so greatly addicted to chess that amongst them the possession of good estates has often been decided by it. * * * I find, in the old Brehon laws, that one tax, levied by the monarch of Ireland on every province, was to be paid in chess-boards and complete sets of men: and that every *bruigh* (or innholder of the states), was obliged to furnish travellers with salt provisions, lodging, and chess-board gratis."—*Vallancey*.

* Caoilte was noted for his swiftness.

in desperate battles—to seek for Fionn and his two hounds; three who were pleasant and victorious.

Foremost were Caoilte and myself, and the Fenii were close after us, till we reached the north of Sliamb Guillion; in the race of foot we won the victory.

Vehemently we made search: we looked before us, and saw, sitting sorrowfully on the borders of the lake, an old man tall and grey!!

We came near to him; on each man he would put reproach: bare were his bones, withered: he hid his face and smiled not.

I myself thought that it was want of food which caused the hero to be without comeliness; or that he was a fisherman, whirled from a distance by force of the stream.

I asked the withered man if he had seen a champion of fairest form, pursuing a young fawn on the plain, two hounds in his company?

He gave us no answer, weakness lay on the chief of the Fenii: sorrowful was his groan:

without leap, without vigour, motionless, in disorder.

Quickly I unsheathed my sharp sword, powerfully the Fenii drew their blades—"Shortly shalt thou receive knowledge of death, unless thou wilt give us news of the three."

He would not tell us that it was Fionn himself who was present: but he revealed his secret to Caoilte, to the man brave in action.

When we found out, for certain, that it was Fionn himself who was there, we shouted three loud lamentations; the badgers fled from each vale.

Conan then spoke haughtily, swiftly he unsheathed his sword: he cursed Fionn without stint; the Fenii he cursed sevenfold.

"By thine own hand, O Fionn, I will take thy head from thy shoulders; never didst thou proclaim my deeds, nor my feats of arms at any time.

"Since the day when Cumhal fell by Morni's sons of the golden shields,* never hast thou

* Cumhal was killed by Gaul at Castlenock. Conan al-

ceased to plot against us ; it is only in spite of thee that any of the tribe of Morni are in existence."

Said Osgur, " O senseless bald Conan, were it not for the state in which Fionn is, and myself in sorrow therefor, I would break thy mouth to the bone."

" Since Gaul is not present—the man without shadow in eminence of glory—in the presence of all we will compete, we will test the strength of our hands."

Osgur rose against the man ; Conan ran into the midst of the others ; he put himself under the protection of the Fenii, he craved rescue from pains of death.

ways tried to create a spirit of jealousy between the heads of the tribes of Morni and Boisgne. " Conan died A.D. 295, and was buried on Sliabh Callan, in the county of Clare. It is said that he was treacherously slain by the Fians at a sun-worship gathering. It was an ancient Irish poem that led to the discovery of his monument. The poem has these words :—

" And his name is in Ogham (*characters*) on a flat stone on the black mountains of Callan."

Vide *O'Brennan's Ancient Ireland*.

Hastily we all arose to stop Osgur of the valorous weapons: between Conan Maol and my son were secured peace and friendliness.

O Patrick of the faith hard to understand, had the Son of God been standing at the right hand of Osgur, at the time he was enraged against Conan, he would have dreaded the foam of death at hand.

P. Refrain from such discourse, relate the adventures in Fionn's chase: Osgur is feebly under gloom, although once his strength and deeds were firm.

Caoilte soon inquired of the smooth-limbed son of Cumhal, "What is the cause of the change in thy appearance? Is there a remedy for thy enchantment?"

"It was the daughter of Guillion," Fionn replied, "who secretly twined enchantment round my head; she sent me into the lake to swim, in search after a ring she had lost."

Said Conan of the bad qualities, "May we never return from the hill in safety if Guillion does not smart speedily, unless she restore to Fionn his former appearance."

From east and west we came together, we placed our shields smoothly under the hero, we bore him on our shoulders to the north of Sliamb Guillion.

For five days and five nights the Fenii were digging a pass: then Guillion of coal-black appearance arose, she came suddenly up out of the cave.

The solitary Guillion came, and a bright golden cup was in her hand: she gave drink to the king of the Fenii, on the sod lying weak and feeble.

The round golden cup was full, in the hands of the lonely Guillion; she gave drink to the hero, for love of the mighty Osgur.

Fionn drank the draught without delay; the king of the Fenii regained his strength and figure of former days; but his hair remained grey.

I was pleased, and so were the Fenii, that the hoary colour should not leave his hair: he himself said to mild Guillion that he desired it might be so.

Alas! I am to be pitied, alive after my king, and after the courageous heroes!! O Patrick,

niggardly about the giving of food, that is the way in which they finished the chase.

P. God is full of delights : praise Him each moment, thou hoary bard ; He is in heaven in the enjoyment of glory, but the Fenii are in grief, in torment.

O. Every day they were accustomed to be in conflict and in hazardous battles : let them be in heaven or in hell, they will obtain their rights without fail.

If my son and God were to fight hand to hand before the Fenii on this hill, if I myself saw Osgur laid low, I would believe that God is a strong man.

P. All who have lived, and all who shall hereafter live, did they stand on the height of this western hill, if God were only to will that they should fall, they would be prostrated without a battle.

O. If the Fenii of Erin stood there, and their strong-handed chief, Fionn of the hosts, all who are in heaven and in hell they would leave headless on the battle field.

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Patrick, I would put faith in thy speech, that God has some share of power, if thou wouldst go with me to His heaven, that I might know if He divides food plentifully.

P. Oisin, thy speech about God is insipid ; not in such manner shall we go there : we must be cleansed from our transgressions ; we cannot get there by force.

O. Patrick, tell me, (if it is thou that hast the most correct information) will my hound and my dog be allowed to go with me to the mansion of the King of grace ?

P. Thou aged bard, thou art silly, with thee there is neither prosperity nor goodness : thy dog nor thy hound shall be allowed to be with thee in the mansion of the King of grace.

O. If I had my daily food from God, and if the hound and dog were at my pleasure, even if food were given to me alone, I would divide it with them.

P. The buzzing fly shall not enter, nor a whit of the rays of the sun, within the shelter of the holy heaven, without the knowledge of the majestic King.

O. Not so was it with the son of Cumhal, who was king over the Fenii; legions might have entered in under shelter of his holy heaven.

P. Pitiful Oisin, I fear that at the time when thou shalt be in dangerous hour of death, since thou art now forgetful of God, thou wilt not call on Him, asking for grace.

O. I shall not call on Him to the day of my death—although in thy opinion His fame is spacious—unless thou wilt come with me in one journey, that we may find out if He is a generous man in His house.

P. The fit time for thee to go and behold the God of grace is, when thy soul shall be separated from thy body, when death shall overcome thee.

O. If I get no help from God until death comes upon me, Patrick, I deny Him during my existence, together with all His goodness; to the day of my death.

P. Short time hast thou, O Bard, on this side the wound of death, compared with the time which lies beyond it; it is meet for thy soul to be cleansed, or it will be sorrowful for thee soon.

O. More doleful to me is my body without food, in this world with the clergy, without pleasure, than the fate of my soul when it shall enter the other world.

P. More grievous would it be for thee, thy soul to be for only one day in pain, O foolish hoary-headed Bard, than for thy body to be always without food.

O. Without an untruth, I would rather be in company with Fionn and the Fenii, without order, without raiment, without bread, in misery, than to be above with Christ.

P. To me it is a horror—and sorrowful shalt thou be for it hereafter—thy much reviling and disparagement of God; thy continual words of madness, contending about the power of the Fenii.

O. It is not proper for thee, Patrick, scandal or reviling to cast in my teeth: say not thou that thy God is good, and I will not sing of Fionn and the Fenii.

P. I would permit thee to praise the Fenii for their bravery in battles, and for their speed;

but lamentable and foolish is thy speech, putting God on equal honour with Fionn.

O. The Fenii and Fionn were known unto me ; not known unto me thou or thy God : if God be better than they, His good and His fame are not known to us.

P. Dost thou not recollect, thou wretched one, thou bard of the hard narrow heart, that I have often shown to thee articles on the miracles and powers of Christ ?

O. I do remember, Patrick, that often thou hast spoken to me, but I believe thou dost sing of untruth : of God I sing not till thou comest with me to His city, that I may see with my eyes if it be true.

P. If thou wast in the heaven of God's Son, O Bard without wisdom, without delight, what couldst thou behold there ? Thine eyes are sightless.

O. If God is generous in miracles He would have pity on me sightless : if once I got inside the door, I would suddenly request of Him to heal me.

If I were in that mansion which is called the city of the gracious King, although I am aged and blind, I should soon perceive if that was the best place to be in.

I should receive knowledge of God, if He is hurriedly liberal in the distribution of food : if He has abundance of bread, I would remain in His company for ever.

Patrick, I will praise thyself, and in like manner I will praise thy clergy, if thou wilt march with me in full speed till we reach that city of God.

It is most fitting for us to go together to that city : if it is a place that is generous and liberal, we will call up to it Fionn and the Fenii.

P. God will not send for the Fenii, or for Fionn of the weighty hosts : they are in hell of torments, and shall be burdened and subjected for ever.

O. Patrick, when thou shalt make known the purity of Fionn to thy virtuous man ; his battles, his firmness, and the strength of his hands ; he will never refuse to have him come with us.

Tell unto thy God, that there was no knowledge with Fionn or with the Fenii of His existence, in their own time; and that if they had known it, His pleasure would have seemed courteous in their eyes.

If Fionn and his Fenian hosts were in power, in order and in vigour, as they were in the time of the enchantment, I would not seek to possess that city.

P. Oisín, do thou sketch out for me a truthful report of that enchantment, and I shall request the only Son of God to admit thee freely to His city.

THE ENCHANTMENT OF FIONN AND THE FENII.

Fionn and his warlike bands, brave, prosperous, strong and joyful, were hunting the stag on the top of Sliamh Fuaid.

With speed they chased the deer, each hero hastily in his happiest running: the stag was

stubborn, haughty, persevering fearlessly on the plain.

The deer did not slacken his rough pace ; he left the plain behind him : the Fenii followed him with dire speed, till they reached the green hill of Lias.

He powerfully went from the hill, from the green hill of Lias powerfully ; from that to the hard Little Rock they firmly followed the rapid flight.

By the time the haughty deer had come to the top of the Little Rock on the stony beach, they knew not, east or west, where went the deer from the hill.

One part of us went west, others hastily east and north, some of us to the southern point, our hounds quickly following in the courses.

Sgeolan started the deer ; briskly we followed the track, till we came back in a circle to the peak of Sliamh Fuaid.

We followed over the plain once more, till we came back again to the mountain ; there the deer

hid himself from us ; we knew not where to find him.

Fionn and mellifluous Daire separated themselves a short distance from the course of the Fenii : not long had they thus departed ere they knew not if they were in east or west.

When Fionn and Daire found that they had wandered so far from their train, Daire sounded the "*disastrous lament*," Fionn sounded "*the wandering*."

We, the Fenii all heard that Daire and Fionn our chief were in sorrow : when we imagined them to be in the north, suddenly the sound of their voices would die away.

At another time we fancied that their voices were in the eastern side ; when we had proceeded in that course, then we thought the sound came from the west.

A fog of gloomy enchantment closed about Fionn and about Daire ; They had not the smallest knowledge in what direction they were going.

Fionn and Daire moved on always ; they knew not where they were going : we in search of them

came with dire speed, but we could not tell whence the sounds.

The two were journeying thus, till they reached the mountain feebly : a young woman of most gentle figure appeared to them, beautiful, lovely, loveable.

Fionn inquired of the form of most sweet expression, "What brings thee here alone on the border of the Mount Sliamh Fuaid?"

"I was travelling over the plain, in company with a man; when he heard the sound of the tuneful dogs, he left me and followed the chase.

"No sooner was he gone from me than an unpleasant mist encircled me : where I was going was unknown to me, until I came to you two."

"What name hast thou, good, modest maid of the golden tresses? what is the name of thy loving husband? where went he in pursuit of the enlivening chase?"

"Labharan is the name of my spouse: my own name is Glan Luadh—I know not where he went; nor can I tell on what course the swift chase departed.

“By thy beautiful figure I see that thou art a true hero on a journey: and truly I do think that thou art Fionn, son of Cumhal, of the steel weapons.”

“The chase was mine, fair queen of the golden tresses,” said Fionn, “not known to me now east from west, nor in which direction the Fenii or the deer have gone from me.”

“How didst thou wander from the Fenii, O Fionn of the exploits and of the firm hand? It is wonderful to me that there is not in thy company any portion of thy people.”

“Myself and Daire went barely beyond the others, after the stag: we know not now O Queen, where they are.

“Come thou with us O gentle Glan Luadh, whatever way we may have to go: we will bring you in our company: never will we leave a woman of such gentle face.”

“If I do not take you away from the chase over the plain, I will proceed in your company without delay: your advice I take O loving Fionn.”

Not long after these gentle sayings of the two, they heard spiritual music which caused them to feel sleepy ; sweetly it sounded at their sides ; after it there went forth a great noise and sound.

“ O gentle Queen is this music thine ; are the musicians belonging to you, who play sweet sounds by my side ? I should never think thy company tedious, do not wrong me by thinking so.”

“ There are no players of music with me, but thou and Daire, truly : nor is there any one else with me, I promise thee it is true.”

The music and the noisy clamour grew louder in the holes of the ears of the three : they were sinking into heavy trances, they had not strength to stand.

“ O Fionn son of Cumhal,” said the queen, “ I am writhing sufficiently with thirst.” “ It is the same with me,” said Fionn, collector of spoils. “ I am not well,” said Daire, the giver of pleasure.

It was not long ere they all fell prostrate : the three so kind went into heavy trances like those of death.

When they came out of their swoons, and recovered their shapes, with form, colour, and appearance, they beheld, near unto them, a beautiful golden mansion of power and mastery.

“Dost thou observe that golden mansion O Fionn son of Cumhal?” said melodious Daire. “Quite clearly do I see it O Daire.” “O Fionn, I see it myself,” said the young woman.

They also saw encircling them a vast blue-waved, powerful sea : * swimming over it there came a bulky hero and an amiable woman.

Froissart relates that in 1381, when the Duke of Anjou lay before a strong castle upon the coast of Naples, a necromancer offered to “make the ayre so thycke, that they within shal thynke that there is a great bridge on the see (by which the castle was surrounded) for ten men to go a front; and when they within the castell see this bridge, they will be so afrayed that they shall yelde them to your mercy! The duke demanded ‘Fayre master, on this bridge that ye speak of, may our people assuredly go thereon to the castell to assayle it?’ ‘Syr,’ quod the enchantour, ‘I dare not assure you that; for if any that passeth on the bridge make the signe of the crosse on him, all shall go to noughte, and they that be on the bridge shall fall into the see.’ * * * * The Earl of Savoy shortly afterwards entered the tent, and recognised in the enchanter the same person who had put the castle into the power of Sir Ch. de la Payx, who then held it, by persuading the garrison of the

Daire said, "I am afraid O Fionn, and thou O Queen, flower without gloom, that the two who approach us by swimming, will be cause of melancholy to us."

That hero and the woman seized upon the three and held them closely: they took them to the golden mansion; direful to the three was the swimming.

"Fionn of the tricks, long have I been following thee, close within reach of thee: now that thou art under my dire sway thou shalt never get out."

"Who art thou thyself O noble knight, that thou reproachest me unjustly? it is a disgraceful adventure for any good hero not to play with another without fraud."

Queen of Naples, through magical deception, that the sea was coming over the walls." The Earl of Savoy ordered him to be beheaded, saying, "I wolde not that in tyme to come, we shulde be reproached that in so hygh an enterprise as we be in, wherein there be so many noble knyghtes and squyers assembled, that we shulde do any thyng be enchantment, nor that we shulde wyn our enemyes by such crafte."

“O Fionn, dost thou not remember the deceit used towards Meargach of the spears, whom thou slewest ; and towards his two sons who were gentle, and towards Taile son of Trean and those who were with him ?”

Said the valiant Fionn, “I do remember that they fell by the hands of the Fenii ; but it was not through deceit or fraud, but by powerful firmness in equal fight.”

“O Fionn of the pranks, it was subtlety that you made use of in the battle of the Hill of Slaughter ; in which conflict there fell—by the abundance of your deceit—Meargach of the spears and those who were with him.”

“They themselves O noble knight, were they alive, would bear witness that it was strength of hand which gave to them knowledge of death, and not fraud of the Fenii.”

“Treachery and fraud, power and strength of hand are alike to me : O Fionn son of Cumhal, thou shalt pay for their prostration on the Hill of Slaughter.

“Sufficient for us, as a witness, the lovely Aile

to be as she is: many a battalion and mighty host now lie languid in sorrow after Meargach."

"What is thy relationship to lovely Aile, O noble polished knight of boisterous speech?" "I am her brother truly, and my name is Draoi gan Toir."

Fionn, Daire and Glan Luadh, were bound in hard manacles by Draoi gan Toir: he put them into a deep dungeon; without power, without order, without strength to move.

Sorrowful were the three: the Fenii were vexed at the loss of their chief: with swiftness and madness they sought for him incessantly, through the whole country.

During five days and five nights the three were down in that deep dungeon: without food, without drink, without sound of harp.

"Aile Geal Snuadh," said brave Fionn, "you remember that on the Hill of Slaughter thou didst receive hospitable invitation; and now we three are under thy sway!"

With un pitying voice Aile said, "O Fionn, it is

true that from the lovely Graine, thy wife, I did receive a generous invitation to partake of food with the Fenii."

"O gracious Queen, since thou hast us beneath thy sway, put us to death without delay; or else give us each day our portion of food."

"Truly O Fionn, I would like to see all the Fenii as thou thyself art, in a dungeon, bound with hard manacles; their grief would not be cause of sorrow to me."

"O woman since thou hast made known to us thy purpose, although our trouble is mournful and our case hard, and though we are sadly under thy control, now as ever our safety does not depend on thee."

The lovely Aile said, "Believe at once what I tell you,—never canst thou conquer my enchantment by thy usual frauds."

Aile then asked Glan Luadh, "Why did you travel in company with Fionn, seeing that he has a wife so gentle and mild? for one of thy estate it is a disgraceful action."

Glan Luadh gave a true account of her own journey ; and, with regard to Fionn, she discreetly said that she did not remember to have seen him, east or west, until that time.

“ Of a truth O Glan Luadh, since thou hast told us thy story, it is not likely that without reason thou shalt be longer under our control, in this dungeon in bonds.”

Aile Geal told the story to Draoi gan Toir : he came to the dungeon and freed Glan Luadh from her enchantment.

After Glan Luadh had regained her liberty, she was doleful because of the bondage of Fionn : she bade farewell to him and to Daire : her visage and her fair form were sad.

When Glan Luadh had left the dungeon she received from Aile food to eat ; she then fell into a deathlike swoon : the appearance of the woman was lamentable.

On her recovery from the swoon, the woman gave her, without delay, drink out of an enchanted fairy goblet, or “ *cup of melody*,” which was in her hands.

When Glan Luadh had quaffed the drink, she quickly came to her own appearance : her strength and perfect beauty returned : but she lamented for Fionn in bonds.

“ It is quite plain to see by thy face, O Glan Luadh,” said Draoi gan Toir, “ that it is not pleasing to thee for Fionn and Daire to be as they are, in bondage without solace.”

“ Fionn is not related to me nor is Daire : nor do I care for the spoils of the Fenii : but to me it seems truly piteous that such men should be in prison, without food or banquet.”

Draoi gan Toir said, “ O Glan Luadh, if it is pleasing to thee to give to the two heroes bread each day, they shall have it : but their enchantment shall be without relief from the Fenii.”

“ I ask not to protect them from death nor from the prison in which they lie cheerless : I only ask that they may get food from generous Aile,” said Glan Luadh.

“ I will not put Fionn and Daire very quickly to death,” said gan Toir, “ I will wait till I get the rest of the Fenii firmly in bondage along with them.

“The Fenii are certainly with terrible speed seeking for Fionn: sure am I that soon they will all be under my sway.”

Aile called upon Glan Luadh to take a turn with her through the golden Fort: there was not a single precious jewel that she did not duly show to the young Queen.

The delightful Glan Luadh said, “Aile, the two are dying in the dungeon, in want of the banquets to which they were accustomed each day, even in time of battle and strife.”

Aile and Glan Luadh brought food with dispatch to Fionn in the dungeon, and also to Daire lying feebly.

When Fionn and Daire saw these two lovely women coming to them, they shed a violent shower of tears, lamenting the absence of the Fenii.

Glan Luadh saluted Fionn; she cried sorrowfully when she saw his features: Aile spoke not one word: the calamity of my king was not grievous to her.

Fionn and Daire partook of the meat and drink : the two lovely women withdrew swiftly : they left Fionn of the Fenii under sorrow.

The Draoi gan Toir asked the two where they had been on a visit ; they told him that they had been with Fionn and pleasant Daire, taking food and drink to them.

The Draoi gan Toir inquired of them, why Daire was called a “pleasant” man : they showed him that in truth Daire was pleasant in music and in song.

“ I should like to hear his music if it is melodious,” said Draoi gan Toir : said Glan Luadh, “ It certainly is, and polished ; there is no harm in saying so.”

The Druid came into the dungeon ; stiff and haughty he was as he spoke to Daire—“ I have heard, and I know it is true, that thy playing on the harp * is sweet and delightful.”

* *Playing on the harp.* It is supposed that the Irish had four species of harps, the *cruit* being the name for the earliest stringed instrument by which they accompanied their songs. This kind of harp is thus mentioned in some lines on the death of Columba, written by Dallan Feargall about the

“If the Fenii of Erin were near to me they would take delight in my music : but I believe I am not beloved by thee, my music nor yet my voice.”

“Play now thy music for us, that I may know if the report of thee is true : if thy music is harsh it will not be pleasant to me.”

The melodious Daire said, “Draoi gan Toir, I am not in a mood for music : I am weak and very unpleasant, because of thy enchantment which has conquered my facetiousness.”

“The power of my enchantment I will take from year 593 and preserved in the Annals of the Four Masters : —“Like a song of the *cruit* without joy, is the sound that follows our master to the tomb.” Wharton says, “Even so late as the eleventh century the practice continued among the Welsh bards of receiving instructions in the bardic profession from Ireland.”—And Moore (quoting the above mentioned and other authorities on the early use of the harp in Ireland) writes, “The Italians, who are known to have been in possession of the harp before the time of Dante, are, by a learned musician of their own country, Galilei, said to have derived it from Ireland.” Bacon declared that “no harp hath the sound so melting and prolonged as the Irish harp :” and Evelyn, in his journal, bears testimony to its superiority to the lute itself, or “whatever speaks with strings.”

off thee, till thou hast played for us music seasonably: if it shall prove melodious, I will not keep a man of thy condition in danger."

"I should not be able to play sweetly, my Fionn being in captive's bonds: I am melancholy for him and for the Fenii who were festive and hospitable, rather than for myself."

The Druid put to insignificance the charms which were on Fionn and on pleasant Daire: he then gave them meat and drink: Daire played melodious sounds without fault.

The music played by Daire did please the Draoi gan Toir: he called into the dungeon Glan Luadh and Aile; they listened to the sound.

They were all well pleased with the music which Daire played for them so sweetly: Glan Luadh was wonderfully delighted that the Draoi found no fault with the two.

The Druid said to himself, What a lovely idea it would be, since Fionn lies now under my subjection, if all his forces in whatsoever part of the world they are, could be brought without delay into his company.

The Fenii went through each land, each place, each people: they sought for Fionn and melodious Daire; side by side they met on this plain.

Daire was playing melodiously what time the Fenii came: with dire speed and inveterate swiftness they appeared, near to the height of the enchanted mansion.

When the Fenii caught the sound of the brisk music played by Daire, they did not wait long to listen to it: they raised a shout of joy.

When the Draoi gan Toir did hear that impetuous noise of the Fenii, he put his charms in greater power upon the two lying bound together.

Daire's music died faintly away: the Fenii had scarce raised their boasting shouts, when there were heard near to us sounds, clamours, and the noise of billows.

There was no one in the hosts of Fionn who did not fall without beauty, in the trance of death; for the Druid had entwined his charms darkly around us; alas!

The Druid and Aile came out, swimming with solid appearance: they left none of the Fenii behind: they brought them all together into the Fort.

Haughtily the Druid spoke when he found them all under his sway—"Since ye are all now in subjection to me, it is certain that I will take away your strength."

He bound every man of them in hard fetters; without delay he put them in the dungeon, along with Daire and Fionn of the hosts.

When Fionn and Daire saw that the Fenii were coming into the dungeon, they shed vehement showers of tears: the Fenii as one man wept sadly.

"O Draoi gan Toir," said Glan Luadh, "the Fenii are in peril, in subjection to thee: if the music of Daire was pleasant to thee, it would be good for us if he were to play again for a time."

"If thou dost desire agreeable sweet music, O Glan Luadh, Daire shall play it for us, and also for Fionn and for his host."

Then came to us in the dungeon Draoi gan Toir and Glan Luadh, along with the accomplished Aile: it is sorrowful for me to relate!!

The Druid said, "O Daire, play sweetly for us thy agreeable Fenian music: dear unto the gentle Glan Luadh and to the delightful Aile is thy battle-melody."

Said Daire, "I am not pleasant: at this time I cannot play with delight, for Fionn and his bands are in sorrow; under sway of thy charms hard and stern."

"My enchantment I will make void, and will remove it from off thee; that thou mayest play for us melodiously the music of lament and thy battle notes."

Tuneful Daire said to the Draoi gan Toir, "I cannot play melodious music when the Fenii are gloomy; for then I am accustomed to be gloomy with them."

"The enchantment of Fionn I will make void, till thou hast played sweet music for us: the men of the host of the Fenii I will leave in their enchantments sadly, and in grief."

Daire answered, "I could never play with sweet pleasant chords—explicitly understand me, Draoi gan Toir—if there was one man of the Fenii under gloom."

The Druid made insignificant the charms within the reach of Fionn and his hosts; Daire then played for them the sweet chord-music and the sound of battle.

The Druid was pleased with the sweet tones of that music of Daire: he then played his own lamentation, and lament for the Fenii before him.

Then said Draoi gan Toir, that ere long, without any falsehood, the Fenii should all receive knowledge of death, without any reprieve.

We the Fenii all raised a wailing shout of vehement weeping and tears, when the Draoi gan Toir said, that knowledge of death was not far from us.

Draoi gan Toir then closed the doors quickly with magic; he left the Fenii in the prison, and generous Fionn, securely.

Fionn said, "O Fenii, never yet were we in

sorrowful bondage together till now ; it is certain that we shall never receive liberty to go on our way."

The Druid and Aile were full of rejoicing, that the Fenii were in their power in the dungeon ; Glan Luadh was alone and in anguish.

The Druid took notice that Glan Luadh was certainly sorrowful, melancholy, sad in face and in spirit, for ever shedding tears with plaintive mildness.

" O Glan Luadh," said the Druid, " I can see by thy countenance that with thee there is sorrow, because the Fenii and Fionn are under my rule."

Glan Luadh said, " I am not in sorrow because Fionn and his bands are under thy sway : but it is grievous unto me, and I am very miserable that Labharan my husband should be in bonds."

" Don't take sadness at all, O faithful Queen ; I will give to thy husband liberty to go from under my sad sway."

Draoi gan Toir then went to the prison where

the Fenii were : the effect of his charms he took from off Labharan who was under sorrow.

Labharan then came with the Druid in valuable power : he fell into heavy trances when he saw the beauty of his Glan Luadh.

Glan Luadh, in like manner, fell into trances of death along with her husband : so that Aile and Draoi gan Toir imagined that the two would never arise.

When these two had revived from the trances, and had recovered their strength, three drops of blood fell together down the red cheeks of Aile.

When Labharan saw the drops on the cheeks of the Queen, it pleased him ; he said to himself that it was a token of safe return for the Fenii.

By that time Daire had played loud wailing music of doleful weeping : not long was it ere Draoi gan Toir came to us haughtily.

He opened the door : sorrowful to me was his entrance : Fionn looked on him in a manner to excite compassion : but he was not grieved at the gloom of the men.

Fionn saw three drops of blood, dropping down the cheek of the man whose visage was full gloomy: he was pleased when he saw the sight.

All the Fenii did see them running violently down his cheeks, except alone those who had perished because of the charms in the dire dungeon.

Daire did not play any more after the Draoi gan Toir had come in, till Fionn told him to play again melodiously, without asking permission.

Daire played, by Fionn's advice, the music-chord melodiously for the Fenii; wrath seized the Draoi gan Toir, "Grief is near unto you," said he.

The enchanted prison he closed direfully firm upon the Fenii; he went back to visit Glan Luadh and the gentle Aile.

Labharan was not in their company; aloud the Druid asked where he had gone? Glan Luadh and Aile told him that they knew not where went the hero.

Fiercely the Druid called on Labharan, aloud in hearing of the Fenii: he answered from a cor-

ner of the mansion, quickly he came near to the three.

“Where wast thou visiting, O Labharan?” said the Druid, morosely severe; “I am certain, from thy separate walking, that thou wouldst desire I should be feeble.”

He came with Labharan where the others were in dire captivity; on his person he put the power of enchantment; in the dungeon he left him, in misery.

There were before him, in the agonies of death, four hundred men of our Fenii; quickly the Draoi gan Toir did take from them their heads.

The Druid then went from us; in the prison, in peril, he left us, sorrowful, melancholy, full of grief, without a leap, without speed, in want of pleasure.

Labharan spoke to Fionn, and said softly, so that the others could not hear, “There is in the mansion a remedy for our enchantment, if it were possible for us to obtain it.”

Said Fionn, “What is that which would give

us a way through our enchantment? O Labharan, it is a pity if we cannot get it, when it is there in keeping."

"O Fionn, there is a bowl in the mansion which would give us our power and speed: if we had it now with us, not long should we be in bitter pains."

"Didst thou see that bowl, O gentle Labharan, which would now relieve us from danger? or didst thou hear report of its virtue?"

"I did hear Glan Luadh say that it relieved herself in the peril of death; moreover she told me three secrets which would heal each disease that might lie on us."

Not long were we in that condition when the Draoi gan Toir came to the prison, his sword in hand, polished sadly, to behead all the Fenii.

The Druid said, "O bald man, prepare thy great head to receive my stroke: youthful or aged of the Fenii I will not leave; I will now put them all to death."

"Do not thou put me to death," said Conan

languidly to Draoi gan Toir, "in thine own company I will remain henceforth; it were a pity to behead me without reason.

"Fraud or treason I have not done, valour nor ardour were in my hand: on that account therefore, Draoi gan Toir, it would not be proper to put me to death with the others."

Said Draoi gan Toir, "O mournful Conan, I will not put thee to death, if thou wilt remain in my company during thy life, without asking leave from them."

Conan went with Draoi gan Toir, gliding out of the prison with terrifying speed: they ceased not their lofty strides, till they came up into the mansion of deceitful enchantment.

Loudly the Druid called on Glan Luadh and on the delightful Aile: Glan Luadh and Aile came, without any delay, from the place in which they both were.

The Druid told the women that he was bringing Conan from the hosts of the Fenii; that he would remove from him the power of enchantment, for that he would be in his company and under his order.

Said Aile, "I am afraid O Draoi gan Toir, that sorrow and danger will come to thee and to me, if Conan is to remain in our company."

"Aile, why should we fear, if the bald man remains in our company?" said she, "we should fear the deceit which is in his constitution."

Draoi gan Toir said to Aile, I will not release any of the Fenii; I will give knowledge of death to them all, and then Conan cannot relieve them."

Conan spoke not a word to them; the Druid put into his right hand that goblet of oppressive enchantments, which quickly took their power from off him.

After that they heard the sweetly-sorrowful music which was played by Daire: Draoi gan Toir came to us, into the dungeon, with speed and boldness.

There was not a hero in Fionn's hosts who was not withered in form and visage; without activity, without haste; in disorder because of the enchantments severely oppressing them.

The Draoi gan Toir forgot the golden goblet in

Conan's hand: to the dungeon came Conan quickly, with Glan Luadh in his company.

“What is thy buisness O bald man, that thou hast followed us with Glan Luadh?” “That we may obtain a sight of the Fenii, at the time of their death and departure.”

Said the Druid, “where is the goblet I gave thee to relieve thy dire enchantments?” Conan said, “I left it where I did receive it, safe with its power.”

The enchanter quickly went with firm boisterous strides of full speed; he stopped not, till he came to the place in which were kept the jewels of the mansion.

Conan set Osgur and Fionn free from the close enchantment which was on them, before the Draoi returned in sorrow, without the goblet.

Osgur took the cup in one hand, his burnished sword bravely in the other: he suffered not the enchanter to come in, till from their enchantments he had freed the Fenii.

Fionn sounded sweetly the Fenian Dord, and

Daire played by his side delightfully: aloud shouted all the Fenii, with haughty voices and severe words.

Aile Geal Snuadh came to the dungeon with firm rough strides, "The Fenii have their sway," said she: said the Druid, "Aile, they are standing!"

Direfully Aile clapped her hands, and spoke in a tone not sweet-tempered: Conan said loudly to her "Cause of hard case to thee and lamentation."

"O Draoi gan Toir," said Osgur "thy power shall no longer be on the Fenii." Aile was distraught with fear and trembling; she fell without delay in death's embrace.

The Druid said, "Truly, the Fenii now have power over me in their turn, in revenge for the power of my enchantments, which I removed from the gloomy man who was weak."

Said the valiant Osgur, "O wise enchanter, there is now no escape from death for thee; thou shalt obtain a fair single-handed combat with any one in the company of Fionn."

He spoke not to the mighty Osgur: his sharp sword he took in his right hand: said Osgur, "Is that what you wish O Draoi gan Toir?"

"Certainly it is, I will give severe deeds and gripe of my hands to every man of the Fenii; till I myself shall fall, or they, in the struggle."

The Fenii went out from the prison in which they had been sorrowful: Aile was without life in their way: Glan Luadh was lamenting in agony.

"What has happened to the pleasant Aile?" said Osgur of the mild voice and conquering hand; "She obtained knowledge of death, and it is not a sorrowful tale," said Conan Maol.

With his polished sword in his hand, the enchanter stood at the door; waiting for Conan, to put him to death privately.

Osgur saw the enchanter with his sword in his hand, as if for battle: he said to him, "Speak not a word till we have reached the clear sward, in front of the castle."

The enchanter spoke not to him: he left not the sod on which he was standing, till he caught

sight of Conan Maol: he aimed a violent heavy blow at the crown of his head.

The sword did not reach the bald man: he roared mightily to the valiant Osgur: Osgur turned on the enchanter, and gave to him knowledge of death.

We, the Fenii, did partake of food and drink in the mansion cheerfully: on the morrow after our slumber, we could find no trace of the castle.

Patrick, I believe that, from that day to the time of their death, some of the virtues of those charms clung to the Fenii: by the charms were they prostrated in due time, not by God.

P. Dost thou not say that they were alive after overcoming those enchantments? It is a fortunate testimony that they fell by the God of truth.

O. What I say to thee, Patrick, is this—from that time they were not mighty in battle, in strife of courageous swords: magic overcame their might, and not God.

[Oisín then asks Patrick to leave the clergy behind, and to take the Fenii to heaven; is reprimanded, and promises

not to talk of the Fenii again : for this he is rewarded by receiving plenty of meat and drink from Patrick's housekeeper, he all the time imagining that it came direct from God. Being somewhat re-invigorated by the food, his ideas again turn towards the Fenian exploits, and he tries hard to get Patrick to promise to talk with him, when in heaven, about Fionn &c., in a *discreet whisper* : the Saint assures him that a whisper even would be detected by God. The Bard then says he is ready to march speedily to the " Youthful City," at the same time expressing an earnest wish that God would not give him a gloomy reception. Then comes this account of Oisin on his death-bed.]—

Patrick called his clerk, and secretly told him to strike a severe slap with his hand upon the cheek of Oisin, which should wound his heart with sorrow.

Speedily the clerk did strike a severe blow on the hoary man's cheek : he screamed in an abominable sound of voice, and called upon the Son of God for help.

Patrick said, " Oisin, what caused thee to scream thus wildly ?" " A stroke which was given to me severely, which wounded my cheek and my brow."

Said New Patrick, " Thou shouldst remember what thou art Oisin ; I am afraid thou hast de-

served the anger of God's only Son through thy yearnings."

O. Patrick, I am surprised that a God who is merciful, just, and loving, should severely wound a poor blind man on his cheek, without pity, by a hard slap.

* * * * *

Portentous danger from death did come full severely on Oisín for a time : alas ! then he had no attachment left for the mighty Osgur, nor for Fionn of the hosts.

Memory nor sense remained in his head, his eyes were blind, suffering sorrow : torn was that merry magnanimous heart, which had been mighty in battles of weighty hosts.

MAYO MYTHOLOGY.



OISIN RETURNS FROM THE YOUTHFUL CITY.

A FAIR enchantress took Oisin to the City of Perpetual Youth : * there he lived with her for

* *Perpetual youth.* No doubt this idea is derived from confused notions respecting the doctrine of transmigration of the soul. Moore says, “ The favourite tenet as well of Druidism as of Magism, the transmigration of the soul, which the Druids of Gaul are thought to have derived from the Massilian Greeks, might have reached them, through Ireland, from some part of the East, at a much earlier period ; this favourite doctrine of all oriental theologues, from the Brachmans of India to the priests of Egypt, being found inculcated also through the medium of some of the traditions of the ancient Irish.”

A similar instance of prolonged life is mentioned in the fable respecting Ruan, who was of the number of those supposed to have landed in Erin with Partholan three centuries after the Flood. Of this ancient personage it was believed that he continued to live, through a series of transmigra-

more than a hundred years, without growing any older. One day he said he should like to go back to Erin, to see his friends once more. The enchantress said, "You foolish fellow, it is more than a hundred years since the last of the friends you left behind you died: nothing is to be seen of them now: over their graves grow nettles and docks." Oisín could not be prevailed upon to stay: he said, "Any way I shall be able to see my old country."

As he was leaving the Youthful City the enchantress gave him a horse and an embroidered cloth, telling him that, whenever he dismounted, he must be sure to put the cloth under the horse, and by that means the horse would be obliged to stand still, till he wanted to continue his journey.

Oisín rode away as soon as he had told this lady that he would soon return to her, and that he would strictly follow her advice with reference to the cloth.

For the first few days all went on well with Oisín. One day, however, as he was riding along, he met a man driving a horse laden with a sack of oats; by some accident the sack fell down,

tions, till so late as the time of St. Patrick, when, having resumed the human shape, he communicated to the saint all he knew of the early history of the island, was then baptized, and died.—*Nicholson's Library*, chap. ii.

and the man called to Oisín to get off his horse and help him to lift the sack.

The giant was vexed to see that the man was so weak: he jumped down and put up the sack for the man. Whilst he was doing this his enchanted steed vanished,—for he had forgotten all about the embroidered cloth—and directly he became old and blind.

This happened near Elphin, where St. Patrick was living: Oisín went to the house of the saint, who kept him and fed him, trying hard to convert him to Christianity: a boy was given to the blind giant to lead him about.

Oisín did not like the small supply of food that was in the house, so one day he went into the kitchen, and said to the saint's housekeeper, "Your oat cakes are not as large as some ivy leaves which I have seen; I have seen snailshells larger than your rolls of butter, and a quarter of a blackbird larger than your quarter of beef." This she stoutly denied: Oisín said he would prove it.

The little boy led the giant by the hand: they went into the forest and gathered an ivy leaf and a shell; these Oisín put into a snug corner of his room. As he was blind he did not know how to catch a blackbird: at last he remembered that there was in the house a hound with pups, and he determined to train up one of the pups, very

carefully, to catch blackbirds. Of course he wanted to train the best of the pups ; he hung up to the roof of the kitchen a horse's skin, one by one he threw the pups against it, to see which was the hardiest : all fell down, except one, which had nails sharp enough to stick into the skin : this he fed for four months, and kept it shut up to make it fierce.

When he thought the young hound was strong enough, he called to the boy who led him, and told him to direct him to *Glen-an-airne*.* Now, hundreds of years before this time, Oisín had frequently hunted in this valley with his brother giants : knowing each spot of ground, he told the boy to lead him up to a big stone which he would find near at hand.

Having come to the stone, Oisín told the boy to lift it up : the boy said, " A hundred like myself would fail to lift this big stone ;" however, Oisín put his arms round it and lifted it easily. Underneath were a whistle and a ball like a round stone, which he had left there on a hunting expedition, long ago.

The giant whistled, and asked the boy if he saw any blackbirds : the boy said, " All the ground is covered with them." Oisín asked if he saw one very much larger than the rest : " No," said

* *Glen-an-airne*, Valley of Birds.

the boy, "they are mostly all of one size." "Wait a little," said Oisín, and he whistled a shrill and long whistle.

Presently the boy said, "there is a large cloud, about the size of four acres, settling down on the ground." When he heard that, Oisín laughed, and let go the hound: it soon killed all the black-birds and the great blackbird, that, in size, was like a cloud.

Not long after this, the boy who held by the hand of Oisín began to tremble, and said, "the hound is coming fiercely towards us; fire is darting forth out of his mouth and nostrils!!" Oisín told him to put the ball down its throat: the boy said, "oh, I dare not even look at the hound, and my arm trembles terribly!!" As there was no time to be lost—for the dog was coming towards them, and was certainly about to kill them—the giant said to the boy, "put my arm in the direction in which the dog is coming, and I will myself put the ball down its throat." The boy did as he was told: the dog came on: Oisín thrust the ball down its throat and it fell dead at his feet.

Then they took a quarter of the large black-bird and returned home. Oisín went with the quarter of the blackbird, the ivy leaf, and snail-shell, to the saint's housekeeper: she said, "well, I declare, there *are* quarters of blackbirds larger

than my quarters of beef, ivy leaves larger than my oat cakes, and snailshells larger than my rolls of butter!!!”

[Whether or not the aged Oisín was afterwards treated in a more liberal manner by the housekeeper, I have, as yet, been unable to ascertain.]

CONVERSION OF OISIN.

OISIN, a few days before his death, was informed by Saint Patrick that—death came into the world because Eve pulled an apple, which God had told her not to touch, and that all crimes have sprung from that one sin of gluttony.

O. If, when I and Diarmuid lived in Taubherard, we had known that God was in want of apples, we would have sent to Him, in heaven, seven horses and one mule laden with apples.

P. God help you, Oisin, it was not for the sake of the apple that He condemned Adam and Eve, but because they obeyed the tempter.

Thou hast been an idolater all thy life: come with me to Lough Derrig, and there learn to praise God, and to pray to Him.

O. Patrick, I will not go with you to Lough Dearrig: there is nothing to be had there but bread and water, and that would ill suit an old grey man like me.

P. Oisin, know that the man who fasts on account of God is filled with the bread of life—come therefore with me to Lough Dearrig.

O. If it is as good a place as you say, I will go with you, to stay for a time at Lough Dearrig: in hopes that I shall get a sight of the seven battalions of Fionn.

Patrick and Oisin then went to Lough Dearrig: seven days and seven nights they passed in prayer to God. At the end of that time Patrick prayed to God to give to Oisin a sight of heaven and of hell. Oisin got a sight of hell, and saw all the giants, his former companions, thrashing the demons with iron flails till the sparks flew out of their ribs. Oisin said to Gaul, "You are badly off." Gaul answered, "Are not these demons worse off?" Oisin asked, if there was any thing he could do for him? Gaul said, "The only thing I want is a thong to my flail that won't break, for whilst I am mending my flail the demons are severe upon me."

This sight inspired Oisín with fear lest he should go to the same place: he said, "O Patrick of the sweet mouth, bring a hatchet with a broad edge, and do not leave the least part of me uncut, for I have long been a sinner against God." He fainted, and the clergy were afraid he had died: however, he soon recovered and said, "If all the sea were ink, and all the feathers of the birds of the air were pens, all the green earth paper, and all the sons and daughters of Eve were writers, it would be impossible for them to describe the tenth part of the horrors of hell."

Then Oisín asked for baptism: Patrick began the ceremony, and, whilst he was stooping down, the spear* that was in his hand pierced the foot of Oisín, and the ground became red with blood. Patrick said, "Oisín, you are hurt, and I am sorry for it." Oisín; "I thought it was part of baptism for the spear to go through my foot: I make an offering to God of all that suffering, in hopes that He will relieve the giants who are in the house of pains." Patrick said, "It is like

* By the *spear* we must understand crozier: Patrick is often mentioned in the old Irish legends as "the small clerk of the blunt spear." A similar accident is said to have happened to Aongus, king of Munster, whilst he was being baptized by St. Patrick. See *Keating's Hist. of Ireland*, part II. p. 13.

throwing stones at the sun or at the moon to pray for souls that are in hell." Oisin ; " From what you tell me, out of your book, I believe that nothing is impossible for your God to do : He can leave them just where they are, and yet give them delightful coolness."

Oisin spoke so innocently that a messenger came from God to say, that the Fenii, although not removed from the place where they had been so long, had got great relief from their pain. After this Oisin became a great penitent ; till the time of his death he every day wetted three sheets with his tears.

Note in the
Introduction. H.R.
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FIONN MAC CUMHAL GOES TO GRAFFEE.

ONE day, Fionn, chief of the giants, rose up and did not halt till he came to Croagheaven Moggovlee, the place where the first giants landed in Erin; there he saw a corragh coming over the salt water, and in it sat a young maid. She came into the harbour, and tied her corragh as firm as though she were about to remain a year and a day.

She saluted Fionn in the language of that time, saying to him, "*Fuisnaugh fasnaugh*, I invite you, Fionn, to dine with me and my father." Fionn collected his servants and went aboard his ship: they hoisted their great sails, *Buccodee Boccodée, Coadda Codeeraugh*; they gave the prow to the sea and the stern to the dry land: by dint of quick and constant sailing they put the froth of

the sea underneath and the sand of the strand over their heads. As they sailed along there were *Sluppiddan* and *Slappaddan*, *Feenteeroan* and *Meelteeroan* jumping on to the blades and handles of the oars: this was great amusement for them, till they put into the harbour of the king of Graffee.

The king's daughter hastened to see her father, who had not laughed for seven years; all that time he had been in grief. Three times she came before him in his walk, and he told her not to do so again. "Father," says she, "you are greatly grieved, what would make you laugh?" He said, "Nothing will make me laugh until I get a grasp of Fionn Mac Cumhal's hand." The king's daughter clapped her hands, "Send down your guards to the shore and you will be able to grasp his hand," said she. The king laughed, and with the force of his laugh raised the roof off the house.

Down to the harbour went the guards and brought up Fionn to the king of Graffee; with the leash of a stag hound they tied fast the toes of his feet to his two ears, and then put him under HELLA NA REIGHTA,* (*Drop of the kingdom*), a drop from which, falling on the skin, goes through

* *Hella na Reighta*. It is hard to tell what sort of an in-

to the bone, and the drop which reaches the bone pierces afterwards to the marrow. Under this he passed a year and a day without relief of any kind.

We must now see what the rest of the giants were doing in Erin all this time.

One day Diarmuid said that there was bad nature in the giants because they did not seek for Fionn, who had been absent a long time. Gaul said, "It would be small loss if you and Fionn were with death, we could do very well without ye." Says Diarmuid, "Never will I rest until I have found out what has befallen Fionn, my chief, my brave leader." He started off directly, and never halted till he came to Croagheaven Moggovlee.

There he saw a corragh coming into the harbour; a giant rose up in the corragh (you could see the whole world between his legs, but nothing over the top of his head) and said to him, "Who are you?" "I am one of Fionn's comrades," says Diarmuid. The strange giant said, "It seems there is not a good fighting man amongst all those he left behind him; for a year and a day Fionn has been with my father, king of

strument or engine of torture this was; the person from whose lips I took down this tale suggested that it was most likely a *shower bath of sulphuric acid*!! pleasant certainly!

Graffee; under *Hella na Reigha* he has been all this time." Diarmuid said, "All whom he left behind are good fighting men." "If that is the case, show me a part of your valour," said the king's son.

Diarmuid struck his spear upright in the ground, he jumped on to the top of it and then sprang off. The king of Graffee's son struck *his* spear into the ground, and jumped on to the top of it; as soon as he was there Diarmuid struck his shoulder against the spear, gave it a jostle, and knocked it from under his feet.

"You have valour—and tricks also;" said the big giant, "which do you choose, to wrestle on the grey flags, or to contend with bloody spears, sticking each other in each other's ribs?" Says Diarmuid, "I would rather wrestle on the top of the grey flags, there my fine active bones will be getting the better of your large clumsy bones, and your large clumsy bones will be getting underneath."

They grasped each other with a hand under and a hand over, in the fair manner of wrestling; by the strength of their wrestling they forced the spring water up through the limestone flags.

Diarmuid bethought himself that if he were killed there would be no one to lament over him, or to lay him out; this idea made him angry;

with the first squeezé he put the son of the king of Graffee in the ground, as deep as his two knees ; with the second squeeze up to his hips ; with the third squeeze to his shoulders. "A green sod now on your head, big giant," said Diarmuid. Said the big giant, "Don't do that, and you will be the best man I ever have seen or ever shall see ; let me up, and I will give you the golden apple which will kill anything you throw it at, and then come back again to your hand." "Give it to me," says Diarmuid. When he got hold of it Diarmuid said, "Against what shall I prove it?" "Against any living thing you see," said the king of Graffee's son. "I don't see anything that I would sooner try it against than your own head, for I don't see any living creature uglier than you are." Then he stepped back and threw the apple at the big giant, and killed him : the apple came back again directly into his own hand.

After that he got into the big giant's corragh, and steered straight to the harbour of the king of Graffee, in the East World ; he made fast the corragh, and went straight to the king's house. There was a big shield hanging by the side of the door for people to knock on,* so he struck it with

* *Shield for people to knock on.* The real translation of

all his might, and all women, goats, mares, and cows in the whole country that were with young miscarried, because of the great noise which he made.

The guard looked out from the top of the tower, and asked him what he wanted; he answered him with a roar, "I want seven hundred men before me, seven hundred behind, and seven hundred men on each side of me." The request was so modest that it was immediately granted; the men came out to fight him, but Diarmuid went through them, as a hawk through a flock of birds, and killed them all.

He went again to the door and struck the shield; when word was sent to the king, he said "I will lose no more of my men, but will fight him myself to-morrow."

The king ordered Diarmuid to be sent down to this passage is, "He struck the instrument of challenge." I think we read, in the English "Jack the Giant Killer," that above the door of a giant's castle a trumpet was suspended, and that on this trumpet, or over it, was inscribed this sentence:—

"Whoever can this trumpet blow,
Shall cause the giant's overthrow."

Carlyle is of opinion that Jack of the Nursery, with his miraculous shoes of swiftness, coat of darkness, and sword of sharpness, that *Hynde Etin*, and, still more decisively, *Red Etin of Ireland*, in the Scottish Ballads, are all derived from Norseland; *Etin* being a corruption of *Jotun* or giant.

the house of the giants,* which was hard by his own palace, hoping that they would find him something to do before morning. So Diarmuid went, and when he took his clothes off he hung them on the peg on which was the armour belonging to the king's son, whom he had killed not long before. The giants asked him how he could dare to do such a thing? He said, "It is as easy for me to take my armour down as to put it up." Because the answer was so gentle the giants thought he must be a weak man and a coward, so they made fun of him all the time they were eating their supper.

When they had done supper they asked how the giants of Erin amused themselves after dinner. Diarmuid said in a careless way, "If one of them has any money he throws it among the rest, whoever can get it keeps it." "Have you any money?" said they to Diarmuid. "Yes; at least I have a golden apple; do you all go down to the other end of the hall and I will throw it to you, let him keep it who catches it."

They ran to the other end of the hall, and he threw down the apple, which killed whomsoever it touched, and then came back into his own hand; he kept on throwing it until he had killed

* By *house of the giants* is evidently meant the "House of the Red Branch."—See note on page 21.

every one of the giants. He then made a heap of their heads, a heap of their feet, and a heap of their hands, and with a great deal of trouble threw them out into the court.

Now the giants, at set times each night, were in the habit of giving three shouts, to let the king know what time it was, before he went to bed : so when the king heard no shout, he sent down to find out what had become of the giants. Every messenger who was sent down Diarmuid killed : at last the king said, "I will lose no more men but will fight him myself in the morning."

Very early in the morning Diarmuid got up and washed his hands and his face : he then went to the king's castle and struck the shield which was suspended near the door ; the guard looked over the top of the wall and asked what he wanted ? Says Diarmuid, "All I want is this—set seven hundred men before me, seven hundred men behind, and seven hundred men on each side of me, and more besides if you have them." Word was sent to the king, who said, "I will lose no more of my men."

The king ordered Fionn Mac Cumhal to be taken from under the *Hella na Reighta* and to be dipped in healing water, so that he might be able to see the fight. Whilst Fionn was being bathed

the king of Graffee came to see him : Fionn knew that Diarmuid fought best when in a rage, so, lest Diarmuid's anger should cool, Fionn said to the king, " Let us make haste to get out of the house, or else Diarmuid will pull it down on top of us."

The king sallied forth to battle : for three days and three nights they fought ; at the end of that time the king was beginning to get the mastery over Diarmuid. Just before it was too late Fionn put up his thumb and chewed it,* and knowledge was given him that he should tell Diarmuid to strike the king between the head and shoulder. This gave Diarmuid so much courage that, taking a spring, he hit the king in the joint of his armour in the exact place, and with one blow lopped off his head.

Then Diarmuid took the king's daughter, who

* *Chewed his thumb.* Fionn was a great legislator as well as warrior : when in deep thought he seems to have been in the habit of *biting his nails* : (alas ! that there should be an example of this habit in the illustrious Fionn) when the people afterwards perceived the beneficial results of the measures upon which he had been pondering, they would be very likely to think that the *chewing his thumb* was some mysterious act, necessary to his communication with the unseen world, and to such fancied communication they seem to have attributed his foresight and sagacity.

had invited Fionn to dine with her, and tied her two legs to the tails of the two wildest colts in the kingdom. He gave a great shout to start them; away they ran and soon tore her into two pieces. Fionn and Diarmuid gathered all the gold and silver and took it with them to Almhain, the place where they lived in Erin with the other giants.

FIONN MAC CUMHAL GOES TO LOUGHLIN.

FIONN MAC CUMHAL going to Loughlin to marry the king's daughter, ordered Conan to be left behind, because he was always quarrelling. When Conan heard that he was not to be of the number of those who were to be at the marriage, he went to the place where he had hidden the clothes which Darrig More wore at the time of his death ; these he put on himself, and came down to the harbour, where the giants were going on board their ships. When the giants saw him coming, they all (except Gaul who was fast asleep on deck) ran away in fear, thinking that Darrig had come to life again.

Conan picked up a stone as large as he could carry in his two hands, this he carried on to the deck where Gaul was sleeping, and struck him with it as hard as he could, with the force of both

his arms, saying, "A piece of the sky has fallen down upon you, to let you know that it is day."—

Gaul sprang up and ran after Conan, meaning to kill him if he could catch him; however Conan got away from him, and, standing on the top of a hill, bawled out, "What a good thing it is for a man to have two strong legs to save him from his foe!!"

After some delay the giants came back, went on board, raised their sails and went away, leaving Conan behind them.

No sooner were they off than Conan went to an enchantress, who had great power over the sea and over all ships; she said to him, "What! after all the good you have done for the Fenii they have left you behind on the strand!" Conan said, "If the giants are likely to have a safe return, I would now join timber until I should have a swimming cradle of my own." The enchantress said, "In the hope that the giants *will* return I will lend you my own corragh: I'll shade and cover both you and the corragh, in such a way that they shall not be able to see you: at this time to-morrow you shall speak to them, so that you may see what nature there is in the giants." This was good news for Conan! he said, "You are the best tree of war to be found: lend me your corragh and, before they have crossed one-

third of the sea, I will make them quarrel with each other."

* * * *

Conan (invisible). "I have been swimming after you a long time ; let me see what nature there is in the giants."

Gaul. "My brother Conan has drowned himself in vexation ; he was a companion for king's sons ; ye did wrong not to let him come with us."

Osgur. "If Conan drowned himself with vexation it is nice dry discourse that comes out of his mouth : if you, Gaul, were with death in company with Conan, you would be small loss to us."

Gaul drew back his arm to strike Osgur ; well did Osgur do to jump into the sea out of his reach ; and hard struck Gaul, for he could not stop his fist until it dashed against the mast, and his elbow was put out of joint by the shock.

Conan. "*Gra machree hu* brother, that is a fine blast you make through them.—Fionn, you will have to make great haste, or else I shall embrace the bride before you."

Conan sailed away, and did not stop till he came to Loughlin.

As soon as he got to Loughlin, he dressed himself in the clothes of Darrig More, and went up to the king's palace without losing a moment. He

said that he was Darrig More, and the guard let him come in.

A woman was rocking in a cradle the king's aged mother: the old lady looked keenly at Conan, and said, "Hero, though I know the clothes you have on, I don't know yourself." Conan put his hand into his wallet and took out a stone; with it he struck the old woman over her heart, and killed her.

The king came in when he heard that his mother was dead: thinking that Conan was the real Darrig (who had been killed years before in Erin, without the king's knowledge) he went straight up to him and said, "But that you are my cousin, Darrig, I should be very angry with you for killing my mother." Conan briskly replied, "She struck her quill of talking into a discourse that drew great blame upon herself, and I should not at this minute be in health if I had not broken her heart in her moaning chest. But let us not talk of these trifles. Great reports have reached me that you have asked Fionn Mac Cumhal to come over, in order that you may murder him, together with the rest of the giants of Erin: here I am to help you, but I hope that you will lend to me till morning, that bride you promised to Fionn?" "I will give you my daughter till morning," said the king.

When they were in bed the king's daughter said to Conan that her father had sent for Fionn to deceive and murder him; that two Loughliners were to be placed on each side of a giant of Erin, and that two of the roughest and strongest would be placed next to Gaul; moreover all swords and dirks would be taken from the guests. Conan said to her, "How glad I am that I came in time to assist your father! but, my dear, I am afraid that when Fionn and his giants see me they will run away." "That would be a great pity;" said she, "there is a cave under ground where my brother has been for years, feeding on beef-houghs; you must hide yourself there till they are all at dinner."

Early in the morning Conan left his bride and went to the king, to ask if there was any place where he could hide himself. The king said, "Yes, you must go down to the cave where my son Toubhan is; I have been feeding him there with beef-houghs, so that he may be able to pull down the strength of Gaul! when you hear me whistle, come up to me directly."

Conan went down to the cave where Toubhan was; Toubhan welcomed him, taking him to be Darrig, the king's cousin. Conan asked him if he would play a game at cards with him; Toubhan said, "I do not know how, if I did I would play

with great pleasure." Conan undertook to teach him ; after they had played for some time Conan asked Toubhan if he knew how to play. Said Toubhan, "I do know how to play right well now, and will play for any wager you like."

They began to play in earnest, and Toubhan won three games one after the other, so Conan told him to take what he wished, but Toubhan refused to do so, saying that he was not playing for money. The fourth game was won by Conan, the king's son told him to speak his wish ; said Conan, "My wish is that you shall lay down your head quietly on the table, and not scream if I draw my knife over your neck." Toubhan did as he was desired ; Conan drew his knife and cut off the head of the king's son.

Thus did the man, who was to pull down the strength of Gaul, die unknown to his country.

Conan went out of the cave to meet the giants of Erin ; as he was on the road the Sea Enchantress met him ; she caused a beak, not longer than the sting of a bee, to grow out of his mouth, and by her wonderful enchantments she made him to fly without wings. He flew in the air over every Loughliner he saw, and picked out his eyes ; this he did all the way till he met the giants as they came on shore. Conan said, "Welcome ; but ye will not have success, for it is to your deaths that

ye are come." Said the giants of Erin, "Go off, go off, you are only a Loughliner asking for strange news." "I am not a Loughliner in search after strange stories; I am Conan whom ye left behind." Said Gaul, "That you are not, for Conan drowned himself in vexation." Conan took off his cap and said, "Indeed I am Conan, look at my head, you remember how I became bald because of the poison which lay on the floor of the enchanted cabin in Ceash?*" When you go to the king's house they will search you, and will not leave a knife or a dagger amongst you. Oh! Gaul, you must take the blade of your knife away from the handle, sharpen it at both ends, and hide it by running it under the skin of your arm."

After a time the giants saw that it really was Conan; at the first they did not know him because he was dressed in the clothes of Darrig More.

They all went up to the king's house; he said that they were to have dinner in the kitchen; but, before they sat down to dinner, all their knives and daggers were taken away from them.

In the twinkling of an eye Conan became invisible, but that did not hinder him from picking out the eyes of the Loughliners who were outside,

* *See next tale.*

as well as of those who were in the kitchen. Word was sent to the king that there was some strange kind of a man in the house, and that, unless he was turned out directly, there would not be left a single eye in the heads of all the Loughliners.

The king went down to the kitchen in dire haste, and said, "There is some mischievous man in the house, and I will not withdraw my hand until he is turned out."

"Here I am;" says Conan, flying in the air, and with his beak catching hold by the nose of the strongest of the two men who were standing by Gaul; "I beg of you to leave this for a while;" so saying he dragged him along to the furthest end of the kitchen; they all laughed heartily to see the good hold which Conan Maol kept of the Loughliner's nostril.

He next walked up to the king and, with one stroke of his beak, cut off his head; then he shouted out, "Boys, you have no excuse. I have cut the first flesh; Gaul, think of the knife which I hid under the flesh of your arm." Gaul drew out the knife and rushed through the Loughliners like a hawk through a flight of birds.

*red
stick!*
In return for the treachery meant towards the giants they brought the king's daughter to Erin; there they ground her body to pieces in a mill made of the trunks of trees.

ENCHANTMENT OF THE GIANTS IN CEASH.*

SEVEN days and seven nights we were hunting in Ceash ; in all that time we met with no game, we saw neither deer nor badger. Whilst we were hunting we saw a dwarf coming towards us, he was riding on an ass, small in proportion ; his grey beard trailed along over the grass and water, and he had teeth so large that the tooth furthest back in his jaw would serve as a hand-staff for a man.

“ I invite you Fionn, and all the Fenii, to eat and drink with me till morning light in my own little cabin,” said the dwarf.

Conan answered, “ I knew you at once by the golden cloak, made in Chartin, which shelters your grey locks ; your little house is a snug and warm little cabin ; lest we should lose you in the

* *Ceash*, in the county Sligo.

grass, and not see you again, tell us what your name is."

"A curse be upon you, Conan; lest you should lose me in the grass, forsooth!! however, I will tell you my name, it is Cobbha Dussahn, of Ceash, and unless you reach my cabin at the same time that I get there, not a bite nor a drink shall you have at all."

So saying the dwarf set off as fast as he could on his enchanted ass; he rode very fast, but when he got to his cabin there stood Conan waiting for his arrival. Conan took the dwarf by the hand, and said, "I will not quit my hold of you till I see on a dish as much meat as I can eat." A table was soon spread with a cloth (the cloth was beautifully white), and Conan held the dish firm with one hand whilst he fed himself with the other; as fast as he emptied the dish the enchanter filled it. After supper beds were got ready for them all. Diarmuid slept on a bed by the side of Conan's.

They had not been long in bed when a beautiful woman entered the room; she rode in an enchanted carriage, which she guided to the side of Conan's bed. When he saw her lovely face Conan said, "I will help you to drive for a short time." Diarmuid said, "Don't forget that you are in Ceash, if you meddle with the woman you

will be sorry for it soon." However Conan did not mind what he was told: giving a great jump he tried to get into the enchanted carriage, but found himself stretched over a pot of boiling broth, and if he had not luckily fallen astride a flesh-fork he would have been boiled before any of the giants could have helped him. Conan shouted out to Diarmuid, who took him off the flesh-fork and put him into his bed again.

Before long, the fair woman came in again, in her enchanted carriage; Conan said, "I am sure I must go and help her to drive her chariot, or else I shall never be able to rest quiet." He gave a jump—as he thought, into the chariot—and found himself stretched on a table; a candle-stick held him up, and a young cat was licking his mouth. He shouted out, "Diarmuid, you who always come to my assistance, make haste to help me, or I shall be eaten up by the son of a cat." Diarmuid got up, and again put him into bed.

The third time she came to Conan's bedside; the third time he tried to jump into her fairy chariot; between them a great struggle took place; but, at last, the enchantress got the upper hand of him, saying, "Those who meddle in business without being asked, must expect to get the worst treatment." By her magic arts she caused him to fancy himself a woman; making fun of him,

she whispered in his ear, " You shall have a child before morning."

Conan went back to his bed and told Diarmuid all that had happened; how he had been changed into a woman, and that he was to give birth to a child before morning. As the time for the sun to rise drew near, he became very frightened, almost to death: he shouted and rolled about so much that Diarmuid was obliged to tie him with a rope; the whole world might have heard Conan's roars.

Fionn got up and chewed his thumb, which act brought him great knowledge: he drew his sword and cut in pieces all the chains of enchantment which were in Ceash. Then the giants were able to see what it was that gave Conan so much pain; they laughed heartily together, for there he was, standing on his head, and the hair falling off because of the poison which was spread over the floor of the enchanted cave.

When Fionn saw that the hair was falling from Conan's head he was angry, and, drawing his sword, he began to kill the people of Ceash, and would not have left one alive if the enchanter, Cobbha Dussahn, had not asked for pardon; begging him not to kill any more of the people, and solemnly promising that, every year he would give to Conan a quart measure full of gold. At the same time, he advised Conan to take care how he meddled with the women for the future.

OISIN BORN OF A DOE IN CREMLIN.*

ONE fine sunny day the seven heavy battalions of Fionn encamped at the foot of Murrn, in the land of lakes : the son of Devvra sat on the top of a hill, looking over rocks and cliffs where there were only wild wolves and badgers : near him was Gaul son of Morni. Fifty strong men had charge of the hounds in leash : the hounds running at liberty were put under care of the hunters of Leinster and of Munster.

A hawk was making melodious sounds for the children of Ruanan who were led by Caoilte : the

* The scene lies in the west of Mayo : the places where the hounds were stationed, to prevent the escape of Oisín, are about the wildest and most beautiful in the whole kingdom : in Ogoul and Achil the views of the Atlantic, with its isles and mighty storm-clad cliffs, are magnificent ; whilst from the ridge of Lwane the rugged mountains, and deep, dark, lakes of Connemarra are seen to great advantage.

baying of the hounds in the woods drove the deer and wild beasts into the darkest shades and caves of the glens.

A young doe rose up in the chase : Fionn, the active white-handed hero, saw her beauty ; he gave vehement chase and took her to be his wife.* This lovely doe he shielded from attack of hounds : he let her escape : his eye followed her as she bounded from bush to bush, till she reached Cremlin of the woody thickets.

There the doe remained till I was born amidst the branches, instead of a kid : by her side I ran like a kid, sucking my mother's milk, till I was seven years old : wild in the woods I ran till I was three times seven years old.

Boomin, the tuneful foster mother of Fionn, came into the woods to pluck berries : she ran to Fionn, and told him that in the thickets she had seen an animal like a red, wild man. All the

* *Took her to be his wife.* The doe is some fair lady bound by enchantment, but able, for a short time only, to appear to her lover in her natural figure. The enchanter in this instance permits her offspring to assume the human form : Bran was the daughter of Fionn by a lady who came to him as an enchanted hound, but the enchanter threw his spells over her as well as over her mother. Oisín was half brother to Bran who, instinctively, found out the relationship when the hounds seized Oisín.

Fenii gathered together, to find out the truth of the story which ran from man to man.

To prevent my escape they placed two hounds in Aughavilla, two in Aughavalla, two in Aughahower,* two in Ogoul near the sea, two on the ridge of Lenane, two on the dizzy heights of Achil, two in Cuirrsloova, two swift hounds on the hill of Tarramud, and at the foot of Binna they placed the son of Boovil, with his two swift dogs straining at the leash. The melodious voices of the hounds roused the stately stags of Barra-glanna, does, badgers, and boars of the glens stole away. At evening's hour they raised the spear to stop the chase: they rested their hunting spears on their shoulders: they slept in Thauver of much people.

At sunrise next day Fionn, in his hunting dress, followed his melodious hounds through the woody glens: they started me and the doe my mother: all day they chased us: when the sun went down I was tired: the hound Sheeve came up and caught me by the hair of my head: the doe left me, alone. Then came Shrocco in strong

* *Aughayhower*. In this place, three miles from Westport, there is a fine round tower, covered to the top with ivy of the most luxuriant growth: near to the tower is a *holy-well*. Directly at the base of the tower are the ruins of an abbey, very old.

running, and took a sufficient hold of my back : Guntaugh seized me by the left side, and Creautagh by the right : Fuiltaugh held me by the loin, and the hound Verran by the leg. Bran came running up, she was only nine months old and not yet strong in chase : when she came up she began to lick my wounds, she was kind and gentle, she treated me well.

Caoilte was the first hunter who came to me ; after him all the Fenii ; they led me by the hand to Fionn. When the son of Cumhal felt the strength of the bones of my arms he said, " These arms and hands are like those of the children of Baoisgne."

Then the Fenii came round in friendship : they brought shears : they sheared me from head to foot : they washed me, and put clothing upon me in place of the coarse hair which covered me before. Fionn and all the Fenii taught me to speak. Thus was I born in Kremlin of the shady thickets.

DEATH OF ERRARAN SON OF FIONN.

WHEN Fionn was in Greece he courted the king's daughter: returning to Erin he left her pregnant: in due course she was delivered of a fine boy; she reared him and cared for him till he became a man, and then sent him to fight the Fenii of Erin, charging him not to let them know his name.*

* * * *

A vision came to the son of Cumhal, by it he saw that on the next day there would be a severe engagement. Short was the chase next morning in Lerrig; when it was ended the Fenii saw coming towards them, from the east, a hero warlike and handsome: by his side walked a young hound, its skin was shining yet dark as the black-bird; it was bound by a chain of solid gold. As

* These particulars concerning the mother, birth, and education of Erraran are similar to those which are related of Conloch (*see page 24*).

soon as it saw the Fenii coming the hound ran three times round its leader, at the third time it raised a loud howl and fell down dead.

Then we sent a man of the Fenii to ask the name of the stranger; he answered that he could not make known his surname, for that he was there to give battle to us all. On that day there fell in the glen, to the north of Oarglan, ten hundred ten score and ten men by the hand of Erraran alone.

We gathered together from all parts the seven heavy hosts of the Fenii: then we broke down his shield of defence by the severe blows of big men. Said Fionn son of Cumhal, "tell to us your name, young warrior, for now you lie at our mercy." My name is Erraran of Erin, my mother is the daughter of the king of Greece, and Fionn, chief of the Fenii of Erin, is my father." Fionn said, "Erraran, my son, you have fought severely with the Fenii; you have killed two-thirds of our number and wounded all our chief men, but for that I care not since I see that you are safe." "Fionn, I am not safe, for my head is broken; by a spear through my breast I am brought from good luck to misfortune: I lie down under my shield, my armour is above me, but if Osgur had not been in the battle I should have conquered all the Fenii."

A GRECIAN PRINCESS COMES TO ERIN.

EARLY one foggy morning, I and Fionn, Fergus, Faolan, Osgur of dire deeds, Diarmuid Donn, and Conan Maol went to chase the deer in the Vale of Thrushes : we were delighted at seeing the swiftness of our hounds in the glen. Fionn had Sgeolan and Bran ; each two men of the Fenii had a hound between them. We came to a glen of beautiful trees ; the birds in flocks sang melodiously. We set free our hounds ; the sound of our dogs in the cliffs was more delightful to us than the songs of harps.

A doe was started in the wood ; one of her sides was white as a swan upon the water, the other was dark as a sloe : through the brake she ran swifter than the flight of a hawk. We wondered greatly to see the speed of the doe ; she outstripped the best hound of the children of Baoisgne, even Bran,

who never missed her prey. Though the chase began in the dusky twilight of morning not a hound had returned at the hour of rest. We mourned for our lost hounds; Deardaugh said, "The chase which we began so early in the mountains was not a natural one."

Soon after Bran came back tired and wet; she lay down before Fionn panting; her cry was shrill and loud: the son of Cumhal said "I know by your cry that our heads are in great danger."

When he had said this, there came to us a lovely woman of fair skin: her golden hair in heavy folds fell down to her feet, it swept the dew from the grass; a crown of gold encircled the head of this lovely maid of modest countenance. She shed bright light over all the Fenii from the golden star which hung from her side; her cheeks were like wild roses, her bosom was whiter than snow; on her brow was no frown; her eyes were clear, without mist; low and sweet were the tones of her voice *:—"I invite you Fionn, and all the

* This description of female beauty is very refined and poetical. The voices of Irish women are, in general, low-toned and musical, and their hair is more abundant than that of the women of England and Scotland—generous, gentle and warm-hearted as they are, it is not to be wondered at that their praises are so often and so enthusiastically sung by the poets of Erin.

Fenian army, to visit the fleet of the daughter of the king of Greece ; three days she has been in Erin unknown to you. Her father gave her an island country, and ten hundred barks ; many are the fair women who have come with her over the main ; many white flags of silk are flying in the breeze ; many beautiful cups of wrought gold await you, filled with wine : divers meats are roasting on spits, there are boats bringing fish : many graceful harps are sounding melodiously ; and many sports are played by young virgins. The king's daughter has beautiful summer houses ; many are her barks riding at anchor ; many tents of silk are spread on land ; many candles in clusters of three, shed bright light over the decks."

Conan said, " Never did we get a better invitation, I am sorry we are not there, for I am perishing with hunger and thirst." Fergus the sweet bard of the Fenii said, " Hold your tongue Conan, do not bring disgrace upon us before we sit down to table." " By my hand," said Conan, " I would bargain with you, that the man who is the first to sit down shall eat all that is at the banquet."

The gentle Fergus said, " Conan Maol, my fine fellow, good sense will serve you better at table."

Said Conan, " You know well that I should be first at table, and that I should leave all the Fenii empty." Fionn son of Cumhal said, " Conan you

senseless man, if I were not unwilling to offend Gaul More, who is watching the harbour of Bina-den, I would strike you a vehement blow on your jaw-bone." Then Conan leaped up on the plain and shouted, "Great as is your strength, let me see the man of all the Fenii who will dare to lay one finger upon me, so long as Gaul More is alive."

Then we followed the wise young maid of loveliest features over hills and through glens, till we came to Hincharrool. The women who were in the ships welcomed the chief of the Fenii and those who followed him ; they invited Fionn to sit down to a banquet of meats and drinks of the choicest variety.

When we had eaten and drunk, Fionn asked leave to sleep for a while in quiet. Conan said, "By my hand Fionn, I am not half satisfied; whilst one hand gathers the victuals, the other has to hold the cup." Fionn said, "Stop Conan, perhaps we may before morning have reason to repent of feasting here." Says Conan, "Son of Cumhal, your deeds in battle may be great, but if I have to repent, you will yourself be in like case."

They had scarcely finished speaking ere there came to Fionn a tall woman of ugliest appearance, she had on her head a crown of gold; her hair was black and coarse as pigs' bristles; in her

hand was a harp ; her lip projected a foot's length ; two broad, sharp, teeth were in her jaws ; foam dropped from the corners of her mouth ; a large cloth was thrown over her back, one side of it was white, the other black as coal. The world held no uglier woman.

“ King of the Fenii welcome ; to you I give all my barks, all my lovely companions, and myself to be your wife. I am daughter to the chief king of Greece, and have crossed the seas to see you, son of Cumhal ; by marrying me you will get gold, silver, and victory over all your enemies.”

Fionn said, “ Daughter of a king, if I were to get all the gold that is under the sun I would not marry you. I know, by the dress you have on, that it was you who met us this morning as we hunted in the Vale of Thrushes ; say, are our hounds of chase still alive ? ” “ By your hand O king, not one of them is alive but Bran, who never lost a chase. Never will I go back over the ocean until I have taken the heads from the bodies of the Fenii, although their strength may be great in conflict's wild uproar.”

Conan said, “ We have no welcome for you : if you killed our hounds there is neither betrothal nor friendship to be made between us.” She struck Conan a great blow on his cheek ; he said, “ Woman, you have hurt me grievously ; I

have paid dearly for my dinner ; my jaw-bone is sprained and it is not pleasant." She drew her blade of battle, she waived her bloody sword over her head, she swept the heads off fifty of the Fenii, though dire had been their actions in battle-field.

Then said Fionn, " Daughter of a king, put no more of the Fenii to death :—I would marry you if I was not afraid of Gaul More ; he would put me and all my friends to death, for he would take the part of her who has been my companion since the days of my youth." The great woman swung her sword aloft with fury, saying, " I will take off the heads of Gaul, and all who are on his side."

She played melodious music ; we all lost our strength ; we whose deeds in battle had been fierce, were tied by the king's daughter : she left us in the keeping of fifty of her women ; they turned the prows of her ships from the land ; they raised aloft the sails of her well-rigged barks, and steered to Binadin, the harbour which was guarded by Gaul of the keen sword.

When Gaul of fierce strokes saw the well-rigged ships coming towards the harbour, he said, " It is a sad thing for us that Fionn is away with all his forces. Who will go down to the shore and bring me word whose the ships are ?" Caoilte, the merry swift hero, said, " I will bring word to you in spite of all the fleet."

The big woman's bark had entered the harbour before he got there. When he saw the wonderful appearance of her body, the size of her bones, and the palms of her hands, he shivered from head to foot as he asked where she came from? "I am the daughter of the chief king of Greece; I fight ten hundred giants; tell that to Gaul, the one-eyed."

Gaul sent with speed ten hundred of the Fenii to meet her; all who drew the sword fell by her on that day.

Early in the morning the son of Morni took his weapons and went down to give battle to the big woman. She said, "Good morning to you in Binadin, Gaul of the keen sword; before sunset I shall have your head in my hand." He said to her, "I have heard that it is best to let a woman say a thing nine times over before giving any answer; experience has shown me that a woman's tongue is her only weapon, there is no harm in letting her sing away." Said she, "If a woman is bold it is right to fight her; I did not leave Greece trusting to my tongue for defence, therefore let no more of the day pass before we go to battle."

Seven days and seven nights the two fought upon the plain, brandishing their blades; great as was Gaul's strength he left few marks on the

big woman, but many were the wounds near to his own heart. Gaul said, "Woman, mind yourself, for I am about to try a stroke which never failed to bring off a man's head." "I can take care of myself," said she, "do you mind your own body." With vexation she rose up on her toes and struck Gaul under the right arm; she cut the flesh from his beautiful white side.

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Now Diarmuid had a beauty-spot on the wrist of his right arm; any woman who saw it would swim the sea after him, he was the handsomest man of the Fenii. Conan said, "Diarmuid, why don't you show your beauty-spot to the woman who is by your side? perhaps she will then loose our bonds." Diarmuid said to the senseless man, "You were in great haste to get to dinner, and you are not to be pitied for your pain." Conan answered, "Don't blame me, Diarmuid, in the midst of trouble; Gaul partook not of the dinner, yet he is now suffering as well as myself."

Then Diarmuid, who was in strict bonds, said mildly to the lovely woman, "You are more melodious than the cuckoo, the fairest woman in the world; with thee I would fly sooner than with any other; you are my lady love." Softly she said, "Brave young man of sweet talk, would that

I were now with you on the road, with you I will steal away if you think me so handsome." He began to kiss her — — — she set them all free from bonds.

As soon as Conan stood up he struck off the head of the lovely young woman. Diarmuid said, "Fionn, son of Cumhal, I entreat of you not to step between me and Conan till I have beaten him nearly to death." Fionn said, "It is easier for you to get another woman than to bring Conan wounded before Gaul."* Said Conan, "Whenever I have been tied I like to knock satisfaction out of the first person, even if it were my own mother, therefore cease talking, and let us sail away from this island."

Then they sailed till they came to Binadin. When they reached the shore Gaul was near the end of his life. Fionn and Diarmuid asked Gaul to let Osgur fight with the big woman; at their request he gave up; we sent Osgur to the battle. Conan said, "Osgur, son of a king, you had better strike her on the mouth, or over her breasts." He rose up bold and strong, and struck her over her breast near the heart. When the big woman fell

* Gaul was a Connaught man, and the Mayo traditions generally represent him as a greater warrior than Fionn, the Leinster hero.

we all raised a shout of joy; to Gaul it was not pleasant that she fell by the hand of Osgur.

Fionn said, "Big woman, now that you are conquered tell us your real name." She raised herself up and said, "I am the daughter of the king of Greece; it is pitiful to relate that, at one time, I was the most beautiful among women. To my father I give my curse, for sending me, his only daughter among the Fenii; he knew well that I should be buried in my grave instead of being married to Fionn. He sent me because Neese the enchantress had told him that there would be born to me a son who should take off his head in battle, and overrun all Greece. As I must now die I leave my blessing to the Fenii, and I declare that the victory belongs to Gaul, since he left me weak for Osgur."

We buried the big woman,* her sword of battle by her side; never before had we seen so brave a heroine come over the ocean.

* "The story of the Big Woman," is the title generally given to this tale by the peasantry.

THE BATTLE OF VENTRY HARBOUR.

[The battle at the harbour of Ventry (*fair strand*) is supposed to have been fought about A.D. 240. A translation of the Epic poem relating to the battle is here given. It is not known who was the author of this very ancient work.]

IN the time of Cormac Mac Art, king of Ireland, there reigned in Hesperia a noble, magnanimous and valiant prince, named Dara Donn, son of Liuscin Lomaghluinig, who called himself king of kings and lord of the whole world, for by a long course of victory he had brought the kings of the earth under tribute.

Having put under subjection every country (except the green isle of Erin), he was told that there was only one kingdom which did not confess his power; therefore he sent strict commands to each king and prince who paid him tri-

bute, to gather together his forces and come before him.

These are the names of the kings and princes who came to help him : the mighty and great king of France, the king of Spain, the king of Lochlin, the king of Greece, the king of India, the Saxon king, and many others who are not named here.

When they were all assembled in a council of war, the Monarch of the world said that he had called together their powerful hosts for the purpose of conquering Ireland, which he was informed was an island in the Western Ocean, whose warlike and wild people were under the rule of Fionn, son of Cumhal, one of the greatest heroes and directors of battles in the world ; for that reason, he said, he could not with justice pretend to be Monarch of the World so long as that island remained unconquered.

With one voice they all declared that in his service they would put their lives in jeopardy ; the king of France went still further, and said that he himself and his forces were, alone, sufficient to conquer Ireland, and that he had made a vow not to return from this expedition, until he had captured Fionn son of Cumhal, and destroyed all his forces. The Monarch of the World listened carelessly to those words, saying that he had great doubts as to the performance of the vow in this matter.

This is the reason why the king of France was a declared enemy of Fionn—a few years before this time an engagement had been made with Fionn son of Cumhal, for a year and a day, to instruct the Youth of France in the art of war; when he left France, the Queen of that country and her eldest daughter eloped with him to Erin, on account of the great love which they had for him. Whereupon the king of France swore he would chastise the Irishman, because of the great insult and indignity which had been offered to himself and to his crown.

When the mighty hosts were ready for the voyage, the king asked who there was that could point out the lovely safe harbours of Erin.

Said Glas Mac Dreabhain, “I am the man, I know well the harbours and coasts of that country, and will undertake to pilot the fleet to any of them in safety.”

This Irishman was on their side because he was in danger of losing his life at home; for on a certain day when Fionn and the Irish bands were hunting about Loch Leun and the Mangertons, Glas Mac Dreabhain came by the borders of the lakes and, whilst the chase lasted, there was not a deer which he did not fairly and fully outstrip and leave behind. Fionn Mac Cumhal checked him: moreover it was told to Fionn that Glas Mac

Dreabhain was conspiring against the king of Erin, Cormac, son of Art, and grandson of Conn of the hundred battles.

For this conspiracy Fionn had threatened to put Glas to death, and this is why he became an exile from Erin. In his travels he met with the forces of the monarch of the world, to these he joined himself, being determined to have revenge upon Fionn son of Cumhal.

Things being thus settled, Dara Donn, the king of the world, ordered the army to embark: the wind was favourable, and they met with no accident during their voyage to Ireland.

The first land they descried was the Skelligs, on the south-west coast of the island: Dara Donn seeing the shore so near, asked of Glas Mac Dreabhain where they could procure a good landing place?

He said, "There is a large and commodious harbour not far from this, in the western part of Corcananaig, called Ventry harbour; there the fleet can anchor and obtain supremacy."

Immediately the fleet steered for the harbour of the *Fair Strand* (Ventry): the great Barge of Dara Donn was the first that touched the land. When the rest of the vessels came up, the king of the world asked the name of the place on which they stood. When he was told that the children

of Milesius, on first reaching Erin, had divided the country, and that they were now on Mac Brogan's portion—"If so," said the king of Spain, "it is my turn to come ashore now."

The king of Spain (Dara Donn) went ashore and four hundred cavalry troops with him: they plundered and burnt the country before them.

Long before this it had been prophesied in Erin, that the land would be invaded by multitudes of heavy forces from all parts of the world: therefore Fionn son of Cumhal had watchmen in all harbours and places where landings could be made, lest they should be invaded unawares.

These are the names of the harbours and of the people who watched them:—Duban Mac Daire at *Carra na Gcoir* (Hill of Howth); Colaigh Mac Caoilte at the *mouth of the river Liffey* (Dublin); Hugh Mac Cais at the *Windy Gap*; Fead Mac Moirne at the *Wood of Meentain*; Hugh Mac Goll at *Moore's House*; Dun Mac Caoim at the castle which is called the *Green Sea*; Daire O'Dubhain at the *Wolflake* which is called *Armhoin*; Faolan Mac Aodh, the little, at the streamlet which is called *Weeping Head Harbour*; Corca son of Fionn at the *Vale of Three Waters*; Faolan Mac Fionn at *Rosbroc* (Dungarvon); Ruaithne Rosgleathan, son of Fionn at *Cuillin island* (Great Cork of Munster); Fionn Mac Gloire at the *falls of Tio-*

braide (Kinsale); Fionn Mac Dubhain at the *Narrow Water* (Timoleague); Fionn Mac Seagain at the *Strand Garden* (Carberry's Garden); Luarga Liathbhain at *Cluthair* (Glandore); Mac Criomhthain O'Baoisgne at *Inch Harbour* (harbour of the Great Mansion); Faolan Mac Fionn at the harbour of *Teide* (Crookhaven); Hugh O'Conbhroin at *Rocky Harbour* (Dunboye); Garrig Mac Maine was at *Green Rock* (Skellig Miheel); Sgeig air Druchd, from Neamhain, kept the confluence of the three rivers, Maidhig, Leamhan, Beithe, whose waters smoothly glide from Cluthar to Tralee; the three sons of Fuaid O'Neabhain at the *fair water* (the Road); Failsee O'Neabhain, the little, at *Ship's Island* (Battle Island); Hugh O'Dana, the red, kept *Guallain Harbour* (Dunbeag); Black, the son of Red Hugh, watched *Tromrighne and Beach Town* (Sea-fort); rough hoary Goll O'Baoisgne at the *harbour of the three battles*; Glass, son of Goll, at *Tiobraid Saille Beinne*; Hugh Mac Caoilte Cosgurthach at *Inbher Fionn* (Watch Harbour); Aidhne Dithreabhach O'Baoisgne at the *Fennian fountain* (Galway); Dubh Doilmh at the *Caoiltear Mor* (Tromringe); the three Garbhs at the *twelve heads of Beola*; Fearling, son of Oisin, at *Innis-bo-finne*; Sgiath, son of Cairbre Cais, at the *two blundering heads*; Oisin, son of Oisin, at *Deisgirt* (dangerous island);

Uallach, son of Oisin, at the old wood of the Fenii, called *Cleire*; Aicill, son of Broin O'Neabhain, at *Rossbran*; Bran O'Buachna at the *threatening harbour* (New Merchandise); Cinnslio, son of Baineola, at the *Dead Women's shore* (Youghall); Donn Monaig, king of Alban, at the *stream of the white well* (Sligo); Aonda Turbhotha watched from *Drom Cliabh* to *Heirne*; and he who had charge of Ventry Harbour when the foreigners landed was Conn Crither, mac Bran, mac Samhuil, from Teabhair Luachra Deag.

When the fleet came into the harbour Conn was in a heavy sleep, on the highest pinnacle of Mangerton; he was awakened by the cries of the women and children around him, for the king of Spain was putting to death all he met, without sparing young or old, the blind man or the lame, so that the whole country was in turmoil.

Sorrow for the hour of his birth seized Conn when he saw the harbour filled with ships and the whole country in flames; he said, "The mischief which has happened through my neglect of duty is great: in this very critical juncture all I can do is to bid a final farewell to Fionn and the rest of my friends and relations, for I will go against the enemies of my country; as I am alone and without aid I shall surely fall in this undertaking, but I will sell my life dearly, for I

swear that some of the foreigners shall fall by me, they shall go with me into the other world!"

In great haste Conn put on his armour, and took his spear and sword, and came down from the mountain with great swiftness; he had not gone far when he observed three women and he ran after them.

The women fled, this caused him to make more speed; when he saw that he could not possibly come near to them he stopped short, he was surprised to find that they were as far from him as when he began to chase them; when he raised his arm to dart his spear at one of them, she entreated him to stay his hand, saying, "You will soon have enemies enough without polluting your hands in the blood of innocent women who have come to render you service, because of the exceeding love and friendship we have for you."

"Who are you?" said Conn, "and what aid can you render unto me?"

"Three daughters of a man of substance in this part of the country, three sisters; we three have passionately loved you, and we don't hate each other at all for being rivals; we have come to inform you that we have discovered that a battle in Ventry Harbour shall last for a year and a day, and that each day new forces shall come upon the strand; but we will put you into an en-

chanted cloud which shall preserve you from all dangers; and if you are mortally smitten by a wound each day, we have a well whose water is so wonderful that when we shall dip you in it you will be as sound as you were the day you were born."

Conn heartily thanked the sisters, who showed him where they lived. They enveloped him with a cloud of enchantment; he attacked the king of Spain's forces; after a bloody battle, through the whole day, all fell before the arm of Conn except the king of Spain himself. Then there was a very terrible fight between Conn and the king; for a long time the king held out with great bravery, but in the end Conn cut off his head with one blow, and swore, in the hearing of the Monarch of the World, that he would trample it under his feet till Fionn, son of Cumhal, should come to his relief with the forces of Erin.

When the Monarch of the World heard the oath which Conn had sworn upon the strand, he inquired of Glas mac Dreabhain if that were Osgur, the son of Oisin, and the grandson of Fionn, son of Cumhal, who spoke so boldly? and ordered him to bring word who the Irishman was.

Glas mac Dreabhain landed, and having saluted the Irishman he asked of him his name, and to whom he belonged? "I am called Conn

Crither, from Teabhar-Luachra-deag, and I belong to Fionn, son of Cumhal."

"If thou art that person," said Glas mac Dreabhain, "my relationship to thee is near."

Conn replied, "How is it that thou dost aid the foreigners who have vowed themselves the enemies of our country?"

Said Glas mac Dreabhain, "Because I had been belied by some of my own people, and Fionn, son of Cumhal, threatened to put me to death; for fear of my life I left Erin."

"By the justice of our cause," said Conn, "although thou hadst slain twenty-four children and grand-children whom Fionn has in life, if thou wouldst ask of him forgiveness, and wouldst repent of thy fault, not only would he forgive thee thine iniquity, but he would even receive thee into favour."

"If I can believe what thou hast spoken," said Glas, "for the whole world I would not fight against him; certainly I shall not draw my sword against thee, my kinsman; and to convince thee that my desire is honourable, I shall directly go and take my leave of the Monarch of the World."

Glas went on board, and having come before the king of the world, said, "It was not Osgur who was there on the strand: had he been there he would have slain greater men than have as yet

gone ashore ; that man is a relation of mine ; I am sorrowful that he is alone, unaided, and so many foes against him ; my desire is to go to his aid."

"I will not hinder you," said Dara Donn, "but, since you are to go, I beg of you to bring to me day by day a correct account of the battle ; how many of the Irishmen will fall by my people while the engagement shall continue."

"I shall obey thy orders," said Glas mac Dreabhain, "if thou wilt not let thy forces plunder and spoil the country, until Fionn and the forces of Erin shall have come to our aid."

Glas mac Dreabhain took leave of the Monarch of the World, and as he was departing he asked that two of his best heroes should be sent to fight himself and his kinsman, so that they might be employed.

Two stout champions came ashore ; they encountered the Fenii ; after a bloody conflict the Irishmen beheaded the foreigners and sent a challenge to two others ; when they came they also fell, and before sunset there fell of them, in all, a man and nine times nine.

Conn had been grievously wounded in these fights, so he asked his relation to watch the harbour, until he should return from the women who lived close by, promising to join him early in the morning.

After Conn was gone, Glas mac Dreabhain went aboard and came into the presence of Dara Donn, saying, "I have a sworn foe in the ship named Mongantain mac Cosgurtha mac Duan, king of the Straits; the same man who boasted greatly in the eastern world, that it was useless for you to collect your forces to conquer Erin, for that he alone, without aid from any man on earth, would bind Fionn son of Cumhal, hands and feet, together with all his people. Although I was then an avowed enemy to my country, and joined with those who were collecting to invade her, it was a heart-break for me to hear the foreigner speak so contemptuously of a kingdom so renowned as Erin is at the present day, without any one but myself to draw a sword in its behalf; so I hereby challenge Mongantain mac Cosgurtha, king of the Straits, in order that you may see his performance against one of the worst men of Fionn son of Cumhal."

The king of the Straits came to the land; between himself and Glas mac Dreabhain there was a terrible odious encounter which lasted the greater portion of a day; but, in the end, Glas mac Dreabhain with one blow cut off his head.

Early the next morning Conn Crither, being perfectly cured, came to the help of Glas; at the same time came Teasdalach Treamhor, Fionn's

messenger, and saluted the Irishman; when he saw the number of heads which were rolling over the sward, he inquired of his countryman to whom they belonged? Said Glas mac Dreabhain, "The king of the Straits, who fell by my sword, owned one of them: another belonged to the king of Spain who fell by my companion; the rest of the heads are the heads of the men who followed the Monarch of the World, who came to conquer Erin. These also were slain by my companion, before I came to aid him, except eighty-two, in the slaying of whom I had a share." He then asked the messenger where he had left Fionn and the Fenii.?

"I have left them at Snabh of the twelve heads, in Thomond, where the Shannon seeks the Ocean." "Go quickly there," said Conn Crither and Glas, "and tell to Fionn the jeopardy in which we are and the kingdom likewise." Said the messenger, "It would be disgraceful and shameful in me to go there without having drawn my sword against the enemies of my country, especially as you have slain so many, two of them being powerful kings. Glas son of Dreabhain, go immediately to the Monarch of the World and say that I do challenge him to battle."

Glas went on board and gave his message; immediately Caomhleathan son of Torchar came to

the land, whose stature and breadth were wonderful, for he was thirty hands in height and the half of that in breadth ; each morning his strength was renewed by the blood of lions and leopards, and he was covered by the skins of such wild beasts. These two heroes encountered each other ; they fought courageously and in a bloody manner, till their spears were shivered in the air ; the strand seemed to split from the weight, force, and sound of the dreadful blows which they dealt each other. After they had broken their swords as well as their spears, and after a long trial of bravery, Caomhleathan was astonished that any one man in the whole world could keep him so long in combat : suddenly he seized upon Teasdalach and, by main force put him on his shoulder, for he determined to carry him in that posture to the Monarch of the World. Teasdalach, perceiving this, gave a sudden leap from the grasp of Caomhleathan, and sprang the length of fifty feet ; he then turned and the conflict was renewed with twofold vigorous anger.

They maintained the combat in a manner never before equalled, with the greatest bravery, for the greater part of the day, neither side having the better of it. At length Teasdalach, being filled with rage, came against his foe and caught him by the throat, and then gave him a dire blow of his

sword which cut his head off from his body. He carried the head in triumph to his companions; they praised the action with rejoicing: they told him to go in haste and to tell Fionn what had come to pass.

As Teasdalach was leaving, Conn asked him to call at Teamhairluachra, and to tell his father to bring the Tuatha-de-Danans to their assistance. Teasdalach halted not till he came to Teamhairluachra, and gave Conn's message to his father Bough Dearg, who said, "Little have we to do with the affairs of Erin; it is the duty of Fionn son of Cumhal, with his own forces to fight in defence of his country!" But when he had thought further upon the subject, he said, "There are but few of the kings or princes in Erin or of the chiefs of the Fenii whose wives, mothers, or nurses, are not of the Tuatha-de-Danans."

Bough Dearg then assembled the Tuatha-de-Danans, and they never stopped till they reached Ventry Harbour; there they saw the heaps of slain foreigners, for the victorious hands of Conn and Glas mac Dreabhain had not been idle since the departure of the messenger. They sent Glas straightway with a challenge from themselves to the Monarch of the World.

Glas went on board, and the Monarch of the World asked him if the forces which he saw com-

ing to the strand were the forces of Erin? He said, "They are not; they are a band of the Tuatha-de-Danans coming to the aid of the Irish, and I am sent with a challenge from them to your majesty."

Dara Donn ordered a strong body of men to land, under the command of two kings—one of them was called the king of Cagh-Cheann and the other the king of Conchean.

Lir and the king of Cagh Cheann fought together; Lir wounded the king, and the king gave him the same vengeance, sorely wounding Lir, and causing him to groan with pain. Breac mac Mannaine came to help Lir, and smote the king; the king also gave a blow in return. At last twenty-seven of the Tuatha-de-Danans encountered the king, and he fought them all.

Then came Abhartough, another of the Tuatha-de-Danans, to the aid of Lir, and he smote and deeply wounded the king—after a severe combat Abhartough cut off his head; he did the same thing to the other foreign king also. When the troops saw that their two princes were dead, they became dismayed, and fled with headlong speed, so that the Tuatha-de-Danans were masters of the field: yet they suffered very much in that day's battle.

Now as Fionn's messenger drew near to the places where the forces of Erin were encamped,

Fionn saw him coming and went to meet him ; it was customary with him, at the return of a messenger from any part of the country, to be the first to receive the news ; for if the tidings were good he made them more pleasant to the Fenii by telling them himself, and if evil they seemed less so from his manner of imparting them.

Teasdalach told Fionn all that had come to pass at Ventry Harbour ; Fionn said to the Fenii, “ Many are the foes who have come from all parts of the earth to give battle to you in Ventry Harbour ; many are the gifts, freedoms, and privileges which you owe to the kings, princes and chiefs of Erin ; therefore we are bound to show our affection by using our utmost exertions to save the nation from the foreigners who are come to destroy us with fire and sword.”

The Fenii promised that they would stand firm in its defence. Fionn then gave orders for the march, and they passed through the countries of Clare, Kerry, and Limerick ; they did not halt till they reached Inch, ten miles from Ventry Harbour ; there they pitched their tents for the night, and requested Fionn to foretell what was about to happen.

Fionn chewed his thumb, as was his habit in cases of this kind, through the skin to the flesh,

and through the flesh to the bone, and to the very marrow; to him it was revealed that, in days to come, there would be churches, and chapels, and bell-towers raised on the spot of ground where their tents were that night erected; and, moreover, that the battle in Ventry Harbour should last for a year and a day; but it was not made known to him who should be masters of the field.

Osgur, being very desirous of knowing what sort of people were at Ventry Harbour, asked Caoilte mac Ronain and mac Lughaidh to go with him to see what the enemy were doing, for they were youthful warriors and longed to make known their valour. Osgur said, "If we go there now we shall have time to play with the enemy, before the Fenii come up to us in the morning."

Osgur and his two companions departed with speed, and did not linger by the way; when they came to Ventry Harbour, Osgur, whom the long march and want of sleep for several nights before had made weary, told his friends that he must take a nap to strengthen himself before he fought the enemy. Osgur fell into deep sleep exactly at the time when Dara Donn was sending on shore four powerful bands to destroy the whole country; as they landed their shouts and cheering made so great a noise that the very clouds were rent in twain; this made Caoilte to say that

although he had travelled the world round he had never before heard so many voices together.

When Osgur heard the shouts of the enemy he started up; in one leap he went across nine ridges of land; seeing such crowds of foreigners on the strand he took his spear, and his two companions, with Glas mac Dreabhain and Conn (for the two last heroes found their courage revive when Osgur came, although they were weak from wounds, loss of blood, and want of sleep) fought by his side with such fury that they made the heads and limbs of their foes to fly all around on the strand.

When Glas mac Dreabhain and Conn heard the dreadful strokes of Osgur, who was fighting on another part of the strand, and when they heard the sounds of his two companions along with him, they redoubled their blows and cut their way through the foreigners, till they came to the place where they heard the din. Ere the dawn of light the strangers had all fallen dead before the victorious hands of Osgur and his four companions.

Early next morning Fionn and the Fenii encamped on Rath-na-Spaine, a hill which lay above the harbour; Oisín asked of Fionn his father, whether the forces would engage in general conflict? Fionn said, "No, our men

are wearied, and we should show the enemy how few we are, that would raise their courage. I will begin with single combats, and end with a battle in which all my people shall fight. Let those who engage each day remember to slay the chiefs, thus will their troops be left in confusion. Who will take this first day's battle?"

Dubane, son of Morrogh, said, "I will, and the Momonians whose chief I am."

Fionn said, "Never did a prince go forth from my forces without my knowing which he would have, good or bad success: I foresee you will have ill luck in this day's battle."

"For the jewels of the world I would not shrink from the battle this day," said Dubane mac Morrogh; "I wish to make you clearly understand that I have no great respect for the prophecy of any man."

Said Fionn, "I am sorry for that; you and the chief who shall oppose you will fall down dead side by side."

Glas mac Dreabhain went on board with a challenge from the king of the Momonians to the Monarch of the World. "Who will fight this great Irishman?" said Dara Donn.

"I will," said the king of Greece, and he came ashore directly with seven hundred Greeks. Between Dubane mac Morrogh and the king of

Greece the battle was active and vehement—they shivered their spears to little pieces and then used their swords; they fought with such obstinate fury that they both fell dead.

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In the mean time the Momonian men killed the Greeks, but not without the fall of many on their own side.

Fionn said, "Who will fight the next battle?" "I am against them," said robust Gaul, the son of that king of Scotland who had married a daughter of Gaul mac Morni: robust Gaul had come to Fionn to be taught the art of war.

Gaul put on his coat of battle, on which were blazoned the warlike deeds of his royal ancestors; when he beheld the coming foe he put on a most furious, angry, passionate look, insomuch that his two eyes appeared like flashes of fire, and each hair of his head stood on end, so that each hair could have held a small apple or a large sloe, because of the excess of his passion.

In that appearance Gaul attacked the foreigners (none but his own servants being with him, who would not stay away), and cut to pieces every man, though mighty, who looked upon his countenance; they asked a cessation from battle, which Gaul granted. Then they called a council

of war, and the kings and chiefs agreed to place themselves in his way, and to attack him, that the troops might be saved from his sword.

But Gaul did not give them much time to draw breath, for the next day he attacked them with furious hatred, and destroyed every man who came athwart him; then those who still lived fled, and three of their kings, with many men, fell dead on the strand.

The next day, at sunrise, Fionn asked who would take the battle?

Oisín said, "I am the man, and the tribe of Baoisgne with me; we receive many delightful gifts from the nation, and we ought to show that we are deserving of them."

Glas mac Dreabhain went to the Monarch of the World with a challenge from the tribe of Baoisgne; Dara Donn asked who would answer them? The powerful king of France said, "I will, for I came with the express intention of chastising Fionn, son of Cumhal; he himself and his forces shall undoubtedly fall by my hand."

"That would be a pleasant transaction," said the Monarch of the World, "if you could but perform it."

The king of France came ashore with four powerful troops; between them and the children

of Baoisgne there was a bloody battle, so that the land resounded with the noise of the tremendous blows of the heroes ; the bellowing sea shone in the light which flew from their weapons ; the earth trembled ; the sun, moon, and stars of heaven seemed to alter their courses and natural motions ; even the frightful monsters of the vast deep forsook the lonely caves of the wild ocean and came into the harbour, so great was their terror ; it seemed as though, by these terrible and wondrous rockings of the land, the earth were about to be rent asunder.

As a flame of fire burns all things which it comes near, so Oisin cut his way through the enemy till he came in face of the king of France. The two warriors fought in bloody battle mightily ; both displayed heroic deeds, but the king was overpowering Oisin.

Then came Oisin, son of Oisin, to the aid of his father, and wounded the king ; the king gave him like treatment. Up came two other sons of Oisin, Eachdach and Uallach, and deeply wounded the king ; he repaid them also.

Twenty-seven of the tribe of Baoisgne afterwards attacked the king and wounded him, and he gave them the same in return. Soon he struck Oisin such a heavy blow that it made him groan ; Osgur, from another part of the shore, heard it,

and was provoked to think that any man in the whole world should be able to cause his father to be uneasy, whilst he himself was alive. He made all possible speed to the relief of his father, making an opening through the midst of his foes, so that they were piled in heaps around him; the noise of his coming was as the noise of fifty horses trampling on the strand. When the king of France saw him coming in so deadly a manner he reflected that there was no safety for himself; he stretched his body above the ground, and with a fearful shriek he took flight through the air from the sight of the people; he went to a dark wood, on the north of Ventry, which is called the "Vale of the Wild People," where all insane persons arrive within twenty-four hours of their seizure.

When the Monarch of the World heard the frightful end of the king of France he made bitter lamentation for him; but the Irish forces gave vent to their feelings of joy on having parted with a foe so formidable. Osgur and the tribe of Baoisgne desisted not from the battle till they had cut their enemies to pieces; he then returned with his father to the camp, covered with blood, wounds, and glory.

Fionn inquired who would watch the harbour that night, as it was quite open to the enemy?

Oisin and Osgur said, "We will go, and some of the forces we had with us this day, as soon as our wounds are bound up."

Having thus said they went to the strand; they had not been there long when the eight sons of Garbh mac Tochair landed with sixteen hundred strong men; they left Dollar Dorgha behind, for the king of the world thought that he was the man to conquer Fionn son of Cumhal, and the Fenii, without aid from any man.

The tribe of Baoisgne fearlessly attacked their foes all that night, and received the same treatment; in the morning none were alive on both sides but Osgur, Oisin, and three sons of Garbh mac Tochair; these fought each other with the most determined courage. Two attacked Osgur, the other fought with Oisin; as Osgur had two prime heroes to fight all his wounds opened, and the blood ran down in torrents upon the sand. When he considered in what danger he would be if the battle should last much longer his spirit and courage were roused, he redoubled his blows till he beheaded them; but the number of his wounds and the loss of blood made him to fall down on the strand.

This sight roused his father, Oisin, who was boldly fighting his adversary, so that their swords were broken in fragments. Then they grasped

each other round the waist with their powerful hands, and nearly shook each other to atoms ; they dragged each other into the sea, up to the waist, so that they were in danger of being drowned. When Fionn and all the Irish forces saw Oisín in that jeopardy, Fergus Finbheoil, who was the bard of Fionn, went down to the strand and called in a loud voice to Oisín, "Now is the time for you to display your courage ; let not one man of the foreigners triumph over you ; think how many are the beautiful queens, princesses, and high chieftains, how many the lovely maids, powerful kings, princes, and commanders on each side who are very anxious about this day's battle ; this ought to inspire you with fresh courage and spirit."

The speech of the bard increased the courage of Oisín : taking hold of the foreigner he stunned him, and by the force of his hands he kept him beneath the water till he was drowned ; he then drew the corpse upon the shore, cut the head from the body, and went to see how Osgur was recovering from his swoon. They both returned to the camp much wounded and very exhausted.

Directly after this Dollar Dorrgha came to the land ; he would not let one single person accompany him, for he had given his word to the king that he himself would conquer Erin ; when he

landed he sent a challenge to Fionn son of Cumhal, and demanded of him the complement of one hundred of the best men he had ; when Fionn and the Fenii received such an extravagant and oppressive demand, they raised a great shout, ridiculing and mocking his folly ; but they soon found themselves woefully mistaken, for in one hour the hundred men who went to fight the champion were fallen and cut in pieces.

Then Dollar Dorrgha put off his fighting dress, and took to himself a ball and hurley ; with his feet, hurley, and hands, he kept the ball above the ground, from the lower to the upper part of the strand, and he did not let it fall till he was satisfied. When he thought proper to desist from the sport, he defied any Irishman to perform the like of that dexterous feat :—then he departed to his ship.

Osgur said he would go and perform the same thing which the foreign hero had done ; but Fionn replied that no Irishman had ever done the like of that, but Luigheadh Lamhfhada and Cuthullin at the fair of Tailtean.

The next day Dollar Dorrgha came to the strand, and challenged the Fenii to send as many more as had fought the previous day. The hundred men, whose lot it was to oppose him, took a last farewell of their friends and relations, for they

had no hopes of returning; this was too true for them; they all fell by the hands of the foreigner; to be concise, on each of six consecutive days he killed one hundred of the best men of Fionn son of Cumhal.

During this time the rumour spread through Erin of the destruction of the Fenii by Dollar Dorrgha—when it reached the ears of Fiachra Folt-leabhar, king of Ulster, he said, “I very much pity the Fenii, but I am not in full strength to go to their aid.”

The young prince, his son, said, “It is right that I and the young princes of Ulster should go to help the Irish forces, opposed as they are to so many enemies.”

“Son,” replied Fiachra, “if any child thirteen years of age were fit to fight in battle thou wouldst be that person; but your limbs, bones, and sinews have not yet come to their proper growth.”

The prince was very much grieved that his father would not let him go; he said that he should like to go to behold the great host, and to learn there the perfect art of chivalry.

The king of Ulster feared that the youth would disregard the order he had given him—not to go; for that reason he gave orders that he should be shut up in his apartments, and gave authority to his twelve fosterers to keep him there.

The prince lamented that he could not see the battle; he said to his keepers, "Gentlemen, if you will grant me liberty to go, and will accompany me to Ventry Harbour, I shall gain there as much dignity and honour as the invincible Cuthullin, or Conal Cearnach, or the children of Uisneach, or Conall Gullaban, my illustrious ancestors obtained by their heroic actions." This sorrowful address moved his fosterers, and they consented to go with him to the strand. As soon as he had got their permission, the prince, whilst his father was asleep, went to the house wherein the arms were stored, and took the best armour he could find for himself and his twelve fosterers.

They went through the provinces, and did not stop till they reached Ventry Harbour; as the prince came before Fionn he saluted him very respectfully.

When Fionn had been told who he was, he received him with many marks of distinction, and gave orders that military honours should be given to him. At that very moment Dollar Dorrgha landed and boldly challenged the Fenii. The prince asked who that person was whom he saw on the strand?

Said Conan Maol, "He is a champion belonging to the Monarch of the World—during six days there fell by him six hundred of the Fenii, that is one hundred each day."

“Each day,” exclaimed the youthful prince, “great is the report which is spread over the whole world concerning Fionn son of Cumhal, and his people, their heroic valour and their martial exploits; it is wonderful that there is any person to be found on the face of the earth able to cut so many of them in pieces! !” “I can assure you,” said Conan Maol, “that there was not one of the six hundred men who fell by that hero who would not have killed one hundred like you.”

Said the young prince, “Never before this day have I seen any man of the Fenii: I only knew them by report, and your behaviour reveals to me that you are Conan Maol, the bitter, uncourteous, boorish, and satirical man, who never yet spoke well of any man, the cursing son of Morni. To make you sensible of your error, I pledge you my hand and word, that were you yourself and that champion, together with the six hundred whom he killed, before me on yonder field, I would not go backwards so much as one foot from fighting you: to make this quite certain, I will now go and encounter the hero.”

The son of Cumhal said, “Gentlemen, I entreat you to be as vigilant as you can, and do not let the only son of the king of Ulster go beneath the keen sword of the foreigner.” Caoilte mac Ronan

and Oisin Mac Fionn, together with three hundred of the tribe of Baoisgne, rose up at once, but all of them with the greatest difficulty were able to hinder him from going to fight.

While the Irish forces were busy securing the Ulster prince, his twelve fosterers went to fight Dollar Dorrgha; he quickly slew them, boasted of the deed, and in a loud voice called for more men to fight him. When the prince heard the champion, he asked what it was that he wanted? Said Conan Maol, "He wants more of our Fenii to fight him, for he has just killed your fosterers." When the prince heard that his fosterers were dead, he was seized with a desire to fight, so vehement that Fionn said it was useless to try to prevent him.

As the champion saw the prince coming alone to fight him, his scornful laugh was louder, and the forces of the Monarch of the World mocked him; seeing a child come to fight a hero who so lately had killed six hundred and twelve of their men, and those the best as they thought; they imagined they could sneer and mock him out of countenance; but the young prince was not at all afraid; with great courage he gave the champion a blow, and before he could defend himself the prince had given him several very deep and bloody wounds. When Dollar Dorrgha saw that the

prince was manifestly hard upon him, his great wrath kindled vehemently, so that he determined to cut him into small pieces; for it was no desire of his, nor was it glorious for him that any one on the earth's surface should stand against him for a quarter of an hour, especially such a stripling.

Thus they were from the first hour of the morning till evening playing with each other on their weapons; the young prince left his foe no room to boast of his skill or activity; they fought with such intrepidity and valour that their swords and spears flew in pieces in the air; therefore they seized on one another with robust and sinewy arms, each striving to get his adversary underneath. Late in the evening the flood-tide came suddenly upon them; even then they would not leave off the conflict, they were both drowned on the spot.

The Monarch of the World and his hosts saw the occurrence, they made great lamentations because of the death of Dollar Dorrgha; and although the Fenii had great cause of rejoicing on account of so powerful an enemy being killed, they sincerely lamented the death of the very illustrious, gentle, and noble prince of Ulster. He was interred with great honours by Fionn, for he had been the first to arrive with aid.

Then Fergus Binbheoil, the bard and messenger, without leave from Fionn, went to Tara, the

royal palace, and told Cormac mac Art, the son of Conn Ceadchatha, (so named because he fought a hundred battles) the danger in which the Irish forces were. The king said, he had not much compassion for Fionn, nor for the forces, "for," said he, "the son of Cumhal has made many unreasonable and excessive demands upon the nobles of Erin in his time."

Fergus, the mellifluous, went on to the place where Cairbre, the son of Cormac, lived; this prince was playing a game of tennis, but, on being told that it was a shame for him to be in hilarity whilst the forces of Erin were in such straits, he gave his hurley a throw from him, and before the next dawn he had collected three hundred men in armour. With these he marched to Ventry; Fionn bade him welcome, telling him, however, that his help was not wanted.

Cairbre sent a challenge to the Monarch of the World; the king of Cappadocia came against him. As the prince was about to begin the combat, one of his men said to him, "Exert your utmost spirit and bravery, for Fionn would rather you were dead than alive, for it was Conn Cead Chathach, your grandfather, who killed the heroic Cumhal at the battle of Cruath, with the help of Gaul, son of Morni.

The king of Cappadocia and the prince met

each other ; between them there was a dangerous and unsightly conflict, so frightful was it that the hosts fancied that the noise thereof must reach up to the highest heavens ; after a long struggle the prince cut off the king of Cappadocia's head, and entirely destroyed his host.

The day after that Fionn asked, " Who will take the battle next ? " Said Caoilte mac Ronan, " I will take it. " He went to the strand, and a hundred of the tribe of Ronan with him. Fogartach, the king of India, came against him with a large force. Caoilte and the children of Ronan then fought fearlessly and valiantly ; Caoilte gave a rush through the midst of the enemy, with threefold fierceness, and slew sixty-eight of their stoutest men.

Not long after that the fleet of the king of Wales (Breatain) came into the harbour, to the aid of the Irish forces ; they rushed into the battle with such fury that the king of India was soon killed, and all his men wounded.

Fionn then sent the mellifluous Fergus with a challenge from himself to the Monarch of the World, and desired him to be ready in ten days from that time, saying, " I am the only one of the Fenii (king, prince, or commander), who has not fought with the foreigners. "

The report of this single combat about to be

fought between two such mighty heroes went all over Ireland; and Tadhag mac Nuadha, Fionn's maternal grandsire, asked his wife, who was the daughter of the king of the White Nation, what was her opinion of this battle? She said, "It is my opinion that all the forces of the universe would not be able to conquer Dara Donn, nor yet his brother Fionn mac Luiscien Lomaghluinig, for both are invulnerable. It is said that on the night when the Monarch of the World was born, Vulcan, the smith of hell, made him a shield and armour; at all events they were made for him by magic, and it is destined that by no other weapons than those shall there be given unto him the least wound or hurt; magic weapons were also made for his brother, therefore these two are without equals in championship."

Now when Dara Donn conquered the world he left this armour and shield with his father to keep, for he was the fosterer of the Monarch of the World. Tadhag said, "Since you are so learned in magic it would be praiseworthy in you to send your son Labharan Lamhfada for the sword and shield, so that they may be given to your grandson, Fionn."

She immediately transformed her son into an eagle; he took his course over the great ocean, and he did not stop till he came to the eastern

world, to the palace of his grandfather, who was called the king of the White Nation.

The king welcomed his grandson and asked the reason for his long journey? Said the prince, "Sire, this is the cause of my journey; I am to fight a wild man of the Tuatha-de-Danans, and I have come to borrow the arms of Dara Donn, which are deposited under your care, in hopes that I shall conquer my enemy."

"How do I know," said the king, "that they will not be used against the Monarch of the World?"

"You need not be under any apprehension in life about that, for the Monarch of the World lately conquered Erin, and has left it in the peaceable possession of your grandson, Fionn son of Cumhal."

The king gave the arms to Labharan, the long-handed, who, ere the second night, reached his father's house. Tadhag mac Nuadha sent them forward to Ventry by Hugh mac Ebhin, a messenger who left the March wind behind by the speed of his feet, he was swifter than a tornado as he ran over the mountains.

Next morning, as Phœbus rose in the east, Hugh came to the Fenian camp, just as the forces were putting themselves in battle array. Mac Ebhin went before Fionn and said, "What do

you mean to do with the Monarch of the World, seeing that he is invulnerable?" "By my country," said Fionn, "if my sword will not cut him down I will give him such a squeeze as shall break all the bones in his body." Mac Ebhin gave the armour to Fionn, and told him how he got it; when he received it Fionn's courage was great.

In the fleet of the Monarch of the world there remained yet a few prime heroes; among them were Uaganaides, the daughter of the king of Greece, and the four sons of the king of Denmark.

Fuirine Lanngheur the eldest son of the king of Denmark came ashore, and made great havoc of the Irish forces, till mac Luigheadh encountered him, running him through the body with his spear: seeing this, the rest of his brothers came to land and made a fearful slaughter; but mac Luigheadh and Faolan met them and, after a bloody conflict, cut off their heads.

Then came to land the magnanimous warrior Conall mac Daire, the Monarch of the World's son; he had on his arm a red flaming shield, which set on fire everything it touched; but he was none the hotter for being so near to it. If the boldest hero in armour did but touch it, himself and his armour were consumed together. Thus he landed (nor would he let any man accompany

him), and made a wonderful slaughter of the Fenii, killing and burning them to ashes, so that they were in the greatest possible fear and disorder. This caused Fionn to beg that the whole Fenian host would pray and beseech the Celestial Deities to send some person speedily to stay the foreigner before they should all be destroyed. The troops did as he desired them, and soon the commander of the Ulster forces, seeing the posture of the foreigner (whose mouth was wide open, mocking and deriding the Fenii on account of their sudden peril and alarm), threw his spear with activity and skill, so that it went into his mouth and through his head, and he fell dead upon the spot.

After that more troops belonging to the Monarch of the World came ashore, and once more the mighty men fought with swords. Conan Maol thought over the great mischief he had wrought upon the human family, so he came to the strand and said that he would in that day's battle do something wonderful for the Fenii, seeing that so many heroes had fallen by the hands of the foreigners. Conan ran into the midst of their ranks, and cut down the first commander he met, together with six hundred of their bravest troops; he killed a man with every blow, so vehement was his anger. Then the Irish and foreign forces fought on the strand each day; each man of the

Fenii had to fight nine, and each commander had to engage one hundred; Osgur had three hundred for himself to meet; late in the evening of each day they ceased fighting.

Fionn son of Cunhal watched the battle; when he saw that Conan was valiant more than the rest, he told the sweet-tongued Fergus to go and praise the valiant actions of Conan in that day's battle. Fergus said, "It is the first time he ever deserved praise;" but he did as Fionn had told him.

At that time Caoilte came to the aid of Osgur, and slew the first man he met; Osgur said, "Are there not men belonging to Dara Donn on the strand whom you can fight, without taking my share of them? Great is my patience that I do not serve you as you have served that man, for daring to be so bold as to kill a foreigner who was about to fall by my sword."

Caoilte felt abashed at receiving so public a reproach; he rushed among the foreigners with such ferocity that he killed numbers of them, as did Osgur and his father Oisin. On either side there was great slaughter, the Fenii and the foreigners fighting with such fury that their weapons were corrupted with human blood. As the conflict seemed to draw to a close Dara Donn came to the strand; Fionn observed this and quickly prepared to fight him.

When Fionn drew his sword the Monarch of the World knew the fatal weapon and the nearness of his own death ; this made a visible change in his countenance, for he saw that his death was inevitable ; but he determined to sell his life as dearly as possible, so he and Fionn fought like two mad lions ; if any one were to walk all round the world he could not find two champions better matched than were Dara Donn and Fionn son of Cumhal, the noble commander of the Irish forces.

Fionn attacked the grand Monarch with such anger that fiery flames from his magic sword flew all over the strand, like bright flashes of lightning before the thunderbolt, which made the king afraid.

In the midst of the action the grand Monarch found an opportunity to give Fionn a terrible blow, which cut his shield in two pieces and took the flesh from the outside of his thigh ; this inflamed Fionn's spirit, with a destructive blow he severed the head from the king's body.

When the Monarch of the World fell, the steward took the royal diadem and ran with it to Fionn mac Luisin Lomaghluinig who was the grand Monarch's brother, and saluted him, calling him "Monarch of the World." Then Fionn mac Luigin went into the battle, hoping to take vengeance upon Fionn son of Cumhal, and the Fenii who were left, for the death of his brother ; he cut in pieces all who came in his way, killing sixty-

three of the bravest. Conan Maol came with great bravery and courage to fight the foreigner who was invulnerable, therefore Conan's sword could not wound him; then all the children of Morni struck the champion, but to no purpose, for he struck Conan a blow so terrible that it made his whole body to groan; when Osgur heard that groan he came with a furious run to his assistance.

At the very moment when Fionn mac Luisgin Lomaghluinig was lifting his sword to give the finishing stroke to Conan, Osgur seized him, and gave him such a very strong squeeze that he was obliged to part with his intended victim. He and Osgur then attacked each other with such wonderful fury that their swords broke and flew into the air; when Osgur saw that arms could not wound him and that blows were ineffectual, being greatly cut himself and the foreigner in no danger from steel, he seized him with main strength by the middle of his body, and gave him a strong, truly venomous squeeze, which broke his back in the middle of the skin, and he died on the spot.

When the steward saw what was done he went with the royal crown to the king of Greece's daughter, a heroine who was on board, and whose father had been killed, as already mentioned, and told her that it had been foretold that a woman should rule the world, and that, seeing she was

of royal blood and as well born as a woman could be, he did not doubt the prophecy would be fulfilled in her.

The heroine put on battle armour and came to the field ; she came to Fionn and said, " It would be but small satisfaction for me to cut off your head in exchange for the kings and princes who have fallen by your hands, especially the Monarch of the World, for whom I had much sympathy."

Fionn, son of Cumhal, and the heroine attacked each other with great bravery, she held out for a long time with much gallantry. Fionn admired her prowess as well as the beauty of her person, and gave her her life, saying that no hero of the Irish forces ever yet fought against female beauty. The wonder of the woman was very great to find that her enemy had such magnanimity, so that she fell down and died.

Flanachdach Fithchleasach was the only man then alive in the fleet of the Monarch of the World ; he called out to the forces of Erin, " Your victory this day is of little consequence ; I shall immediately go and bring more troops, and since your hosts are dead or mortally wounded, I shall have Erin to myself."

Fionn was recovering from a death-like swoon and called to him Fergus, the sweet-tongued, asking if he had heard the words of the foreigner ?

Said Fergus, "Truly I have heard and it is a burning to my heart." "How fares the battle now?" said Fionn.

"I can give you but a melancholy account, for from the beginning of this day's battle the Fenii and the foreigners have fought for every inch of ground; the battle has been so valiant and so sharp that they are all lying on the strand dead or wounded to death: the streams of blood which are now flowing into the sea are greater than the floods which run down from the mountains after a violent torrent of rain. There is now not one man of the Irish forces standing on the strand but your fosterer, Beul mac Cronntainn." Fionn said, "Go instantly, and tell him to silence the foreigner."

Fergus went to Beul mac Cronntainn and said, "How do you fare after this great conflict?"

He replied, "My bones would fall asunder were it not that my battle-armour keeps them together; and yet, what gives me more grief than the pain I suffer is to hear what the foreigner says aboard his ship; Fergus, take me on your back to the edge of the water, so that I may put a stop to his proceedings."

Fergus took him to the water, and Beul swam to the ship and reached out his hand to the foreigner, who came to take him up, thinking

that he was one of his own people who had fortunately escaped ; but Beul seized him so firmly by the hand that he pulled him into the sea, and they were both drowned.

The next morning the waves cast Beul's corpse ashore, and his wife, who was a daughter of the king of kings, came above her husband's body, and her grief was so great that she fell dead upon him. Fionn was sorrowful on account of this sudden disaster ; he gave orders that they should be buried on the right hand side of the harbour, and it is called Beul's Sepulchre to this day.

[The Fenii who were only wounded recovered, so great was their joy at being the victors, and with much noise took possession of the strand and of the ships ; the latter they kept as very dear objects, for which so much Irish blood had been shed in a battle which lasted a whole year and a day.]

THE END.

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